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OUT OF THE PAST

BY

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OUT OF THE PAST.

CHAPTER I.

Threads in the woof of Destiny
Mingle their dark and shine—
Love in its glory of sacrifice,
Fear with its terrors fine.
Birth, Death and the Hero—
Which in the woof is strong?
Which thread will break in the weaving
And silence the weaver's song?

The heat of a midsummer noon quivered in the heavy air; no wind stirred, street and courtyard alike were deserted, and the white walls of stuccoed buildings glared back at the sun. The red tiles on roof and wall seemed darts of flame where their edges outlined the houses scattered irregularly on the steep hillside of St. Cloud; and the winding river beneath shone fiercely. There was no air—only heat, heat insufferable. An alley zigzagging down the sharpest incline of the hill above the village seemed to focus all the heat of sun and reflecting surfaces, and there was not an inch of shade on its cobblestones. A goat, passing in the street above, looked down,

but wandered on, for the door-way of the only garden was closed on the glaring, barren spot. Noon was passing.

A tall, black figure crossed the street above and came quickly through the passage, the white wings of her head-covering glistening and her garments swaying about as she came over the uneven pavement, with the cross of the Saviour gleaming from her girdle. She had thrust her hands within her loose sleeves for protection from the sun, and on one arm carried a large basket.

She knocked repeatedly at the garden door without receiving any response, and, crossing the passage, looked up at the open windows, calling:

“Madame! It is Sister Clothilde from the nursery.”

She pushed the door back and entered the house, to find no one either in the first room or in the kitchen; the shutters of the inner chamber were closed, and with the glare still in her eyes, she could at first distinguish nothing within the room. A ray of light shot through the space above the shutter, falling upon a white figure lying on the bed, with its coverings thrown partly on the floor.

Something moved there with a quavering, stifled sound as the tall woman reached the bed and gently parted the clothes.

“Oh, mon Dieu! the little one—the poor little one—

and pretty madame! Jesu! without help, without a human being!"

The face of the mother grew gradually more clearly defined, until it seemed to have absorbed all the light there was in the room. It was thrown back, deep in the pillow, with dark circles about its eyes, and its nostrils widely distended. Under the touch of the Sister's hands the child began to cry and she laid it down, wrapped in narrow strips of linen torn from the sheet. She listened in vain on the woman's breast for the faintest heart-beat, and placed a hand mirror before the still face, whispering a prayer the while; but when she turned the mirror to look, her prayer ceased abruptly. There was not the faintest trace of film on the polished surface of the glass. The high, strident crying of the child had ceased, and but for its short, rapid breathing the silence of the place would have been complete. Green lights and shadows filled the room, and the sultry air crept slowly in between the slats.

With a tender, hesitating touch, the Sister smoothed the face, which as yet showed no sign of death save its whiteness and cold, and spread the delicate lace, crumpled and matted about the shoulders and throat, drawing the folds of fresh linen about the figure until it lay perfect and chaste in its still white lines.

She left the room noiselessly and ran through the court, shielding her eyes from the blazing light.

On the street above a boy was edging his way along the wall.

"Garcon," she cried, "run as fast as you can for the doctor and the priest!" The boy gave a hesitating glance skyward.

"You are afraid of the sun? Remember, there will be something hotter to run from when you die. Ah, Antoine, is it you? Quick! Bring the doctor and Father Benedict to the house here on the passage."

The boy nodded when he recognized her, and scurried off.

Back in the shadowed room the Sister placed candles by the side of the bed, and unfastening the crucifix from her belt, stood it above the head of the fair-haired woman. In the shadiest corner the new-born child was sleeping on a pillow.

The doctor was the first to arrive. He came in quickly and stood by the bed, gravely silent.

"It is death," he said.

"Could you have saved her an hour ago?"

He slightly shrugged his shoulders, asking:

"Did she breathe then?"

"There was no sign on the mirror."

"Then it was all over before that. Is there another dead?" he asked, looking about the room.

She shook her head, and, raising the basket, held it while he carefully examined the sleeping infant.

The examination over, he said with a smile: "I think you know better what to do with it than I. If you take it away from here to-day, wait till an hour before sun-down, and be careful of the light. Good-day, madame." He was going when she exclaimed:

"I must search the house; will you not stay to witness?"

"I have other calls. A priest will be better than I. Good-day, madame."

"He is not a Catholic," murmured Sister Clothilde.

She lighted the candles and strewed the petals of the roses on the pillows. The light of the candles grew steady, while she gazed on the golden crowned face and crossed herself with a startled movement as she saw a tear lying beneath the lashes.

The door opened quietly, and a monk stood for an instant a silent spectator, then dropped on his knees for self-communion before beginning the rite of the dead. The interval over, he rose, and, loosening his cowl, stood by the bed, pouring forth the long, low cadence of the ritual, intoning the periods in a deep, rich voice. It rose

and fell like a wind in the forest. For nearly half an hour the voice filled the room. The monk scattered holy water over the body and knelt beside the bed opposite Clothilde. A long, unbroken silence followed. They rose and crossed themselves.

"When did this happen?" the priest asked.

"Before I came at noon."

"Who is she?"

"I do not know."

"How came you here?"

"A month ago she came to the nursery to see the children and, giving us money, she bade me come here to-day to receive clothes for my poor. She said she should be moving in that time from Paris to St. Cloud."

"Did she give you her address or name?"

"No."

"Is she French?"

"She said she was an American."

The priest stepped to the head of the bed and looked at the hands of the dead woman.

"She wears two rings."

"I had not thought to look," said Sister Clothilde, simply. "We must search the house. There is a letter lying there which may help us. Will you read it?"

"I do not read English well."

She took the letter to the window, while the monk leaned his elbow on the toilet-table watching her. The candle light heightened the deep coloring of his young face, falling softly on his yellow robe, defining the white lining of its cowl and the white knotted cords about his waist. The Sister scanned the letter first, glancing nervously at the dead woman.

"It is a letter to her husband. I think I ought not to read it."

"As you please, but tell me the facts in it, and let me make a copy."

"Why, Benedict?"

"We are the only witnesses and in time our testimony will be needed."

"Do you think we may share the care of the boy?"

"Heaven has placed him in our charge."

"She calls him Robert—her husband, I suppose; tells him she has left Paris because the care of the house was too great; begs him to save his father even the mention of her name."

"Ah! I thought the face of a coward would show itself."

"Why?"

"Could any but a coward leave a woman alone in a foreign land to meet this? It is worse than I thought."

"Benedict!"

"It proves the existence of one more woman who still loved when she had ceased to be loved."

"I think you are unjust. Do you believe any one could cease to love her?" He turned a long look on the shrouded figure.

"Perhaps no true man could forget. But show me one such. They are few!"

"Do not forget where you are speaking," she whispered.

"No. I speak in the presence of the wronged dead; in the presence of the child who will grow to manhood knowing neither father nor mother; who will always carry in his breast a bitter doubt."

"But I will keep the rings—everything which can prove that he is the son of a true woman."

"Even if you prove it to the world," the monk answered wearily, "can you arm the child against his secret fears? He will know, from his own manhood, that no true man could have left her."

She loosened the kerchief about her throat and sank into a chair. Presently she said, softly:

"Is the world, then, so bad?"

"Look there!" he cried sharply, pointing to the bed.

She rose trembling, and crossing her hands on her breast said gently:

"I see only the hand of God in the greatest of His mysteries."

The monk's head sank forward and his hand dropped. She gazed at the unnatural beauty of the woman's face, a beauty more than human in the strange mingling of the light of day and the golden candle light. The green shifting shadows of the room seemed to form an impenetrable barrier between her and the outer world. The nun stood without the circle of light, but something of its softened glory shone in her face. Benedict rose, and drawing down her hands he touched them with his forehead.

"You always save me from myself, my friend. I thank God He taught me how to love you."

An hour later she stood waiting without the chamber as Benedict opened the door. In the outer room she had opened the shutters upon a table covered with linen, laces, and a few pieces of jewelry.

"Are there no papers; no bills or letters?"

"No; but there is a large sum of money. Will you please count it?" Benedict complied, and they looked at each other.

"What shall we do?" she asked.

"Are you sure there are no papers to suggest her identity or any connection with other persons?"

"There is absolutely nothing. I have searched through waste paper and all. Her linen is marked with the letters A. D."

Coming at last again to the silent room, they brought out the basket and set it between them, talking low as they watched the breathing of the tiny being, until their absorption was broken by the tolling of the vesper bell from the chapel tower on the hill. They knelt where they were, and Benedict softly intoned the prayer.

All was prepared for the nun's departure with the child.

At the door she turned impulsively to the monk. "Let me examine the mother's rings—there may be some mark."

Benedict answered by bringing them to her, and they read engraved within one of them, "R. W. to Amy Dinsmore. May 10th, 1876."

"A year and three months ago," said the Sister, musingly. "It may have been the ring of betrothal. God be with you."

"And with you," returned Benedict. "Send word to the Superior of what has happened." She nodded, passing quickly up the passage with her muffled burden,

while Benedict watched her from the door of the long white wall. A breeze stirred in the treetops. The shrill whistle of the steamer sounded as the nun hurried down the steep incline, and, running through the gates, stepped on board. From the passage overhanging the town, the young monk watched the receding vessel until it passed beyond the turn of the shining river. The sun, too, would soon be gone. He locked the garden door-way and slowly went into the inner room. The last lighted candle beside the shrouded figure had sunk into a ring of white. The flame rose suddenly, blue and high, illumining the face once again. The monk was alone with death in the still, warm darkness.

CHAPTER II.

"Whatever in your life you have thought unchangeable, shall change; whatever you have thought to change, shall remain. So run the cards."

Twenty-one years had passed over the head of Benedict, graving his face and hands with traces of hardship and struggle, but leaving few lines of gracious joy. He had been strong and intractable. He still wore his sandals and his robe of low station, while others mounted beyond him to the vantage of ecclesiastical success. Masterful and able though he was, he looked gravely forward to ending his life in cheerless days of ceaseless work. He loved the pulpit and those moments rarely vouchsafed him when he looked down into the eyes of the people and spoke to them from the knowledge won by his sorrow and sacrifice.

But those were most rare moments, accorded with such niggardly hand, that when the news ran among the people that Father Benedict would preach to them they crowded the edifice as though bidden to a feast.

While his life had been hardening to its crystal form Robert Dinsmore had been born to the care of strangers,

Robert's young life had been unfolding, nebulous and uncertain in its values. It was twenty-one years since and he stood to-day within the walls of the monastery looking defiantly at his past, and watching his opportunity to break with it. Benedict had used a portion of his money in the search for his father; but to no purpose. Robert grew up proudly alone, daring every one with his quick, brilliant eyes, to cast the slur he hated. How great a scourge his unfathered life and its ill-fame had been no one can know who has not been born to wear that shirt of nettles.

The ancient garden in which he and Benedict stood silently regarding each other, with a sense of the parting of ways, spread about them in a wide acreage of autumnal glory. The garden was mellow with memories of olden pomp and power, disclosed in its iron work of fantastic fashioning, in the make of its walls and in the stately beauty of its avenues. At the same time, the garden was young with the beauty of countless flowers—the life of the hour zealously fostered by the monks.

At this moment, conscious of the old and the new ways of living, which seemed to lay hands upon him, each to make him its own, Robert stood watching Benedict, in whose hands he had reluctantly placed a few leaves of manuscript.

"This is part of your diary. It is good to see it. I suppose these are pages of special importance."

"No. I took them at random, excepting the last page."

"For what purpose?"

"I think you will see when you have finished."

At first Benedict read to himself, but, gradually forgetting his surroundings, he walked back and forth, reading half aloud:

"'The monastery walls are closing in upon me with the weight of gratitude they impose. Here I have spent my life since early childhood. To the fathers I owe all my knowledge, a training so systematic and so liberal that the learning of the schools would be meagre beside it. Here, under Father Anselm music has become my mistress. Yet I dare not stay here. Better an honest layman than a renegade priest. I cannot decide to-day. The sense of all I owe these dear friends sits heavy on me.' * * * 'I must be free. How the world sings to me! How I long to pass these walls! How the joy of strife runs in my veins. To measure strength with the times—to be plunged in the current of my generation. I am dead here. I have not been born yet. These men in the world of whom I read from day to day—am I their equal? To them the achievement—to me the fate of the dry leaves upon which the history of their deeds is

written. Let me forget it all. And yet they would make of me a priest and promise me a great future—preferment, etc. The irony of misconception.’ * * *

“ ‘To-day I have disgraced myself and the fathers, and I am told that the monastery will soon be in disfavor because of my deeds. I did but trounce a fellow who richly deserved it. Let me get away; where my life belongs only to the Law and myself.’ * * *

“ ‘The day is black with the stain of yesterday—not of the fight, but of its vile cause. I am sick to the heart with this knowledge that whoever has an evil thought may cast it upon me with a show of justice. It is worse than a live flesh wound—I could cauterize that. But how cauterize this wound that opens now in my heart, now in my very soul? Yet I look respectable. My parentage cannot have been absolutely low. Slender hands, and a head with features regular and sane, hardly can be the product of low-born individuals. Yet how came I here otherwise? God! How deep a punishment my father has laid upon me.’ * * *

“ ‘To-day I am free of that terrible impulse to punish others for my misfortune. My violin helps me. It sings of another world. It knows no baseness, a paladin or paradise living for perfection only.’ * * *

“ ‘Another doubtful day, and, as usual, I am at odds

with my surroundings. I played half the day away yesterday and, in consequence, I had the whole monastery by the ears. No one could keep at prayers because of my playing, it seems. The Superior's discourse was spoiled. The novitiates trampled the seedlings under my windows and failed in their tasks. The deliberative body of high authorities came to settle matters of high concern, forgot what they had come for, and departed in ashes of contrition. This adds a new temptation to my list. I would like to try my skill on as many worldlings who know what music is. But small chance of that. I have been admonished and banished to a tower-top with my offending paladin, where we will have the clouds and the sparrows to entertain.

“‘I had not counted on the pigeons. They come in droves and whirl about my head while I play.

“‘The city lies beneath me in its wondrous meanings. They incite to long day dreaming. What are the dramas going forward, what tragedies, what forgotten lines of gentle simplicity are hidden under the roofs?

“‘What is the government doing? Will it bring Dreyfus back to trial or will he be found dead when sought for? What is it all about? And why does no one care for the ruined life of a man, and that other life ruined with his? Strange country—at times I think I am not

your son. Even Pater Benedict sides against my understanding—Benedict, usually so just.’ * * *

“ ‘A violinist is needed at the Grand Opera House. I shall apply. I shall succeed. How simple it all seems. All my struggle was with the phantoms of my brain, after all.

“ ‘I obtained leave and went to the trial. My mind is still on fire with it—not with the examination, but with life in its struggle of man to man. The pitting of oneself against other men—there was the fearful pleasure. I want more men to meet like that.’ * * *

“ ‘To-day I have secured my rooms and I go on duty to-morrow. There is but one sore spot—my Pater. I should have told him yesterday had he not been in Rouen. I fear he will see only ingratitude in this. A soul so high as his is never at war with itself as mine is. It will not stoop to measure a sacrifice as I measure the sacrifice of every day and every hour. With a nature greater and more turbulent than mine, he treads this joyless road serenely when my whole being would be in revolt. What a joy it would be to take him with me into the world! What a path we would hew—my paladin, Pater and I. But I am an enthusiastic fool. He has no love of the world. He will chide me.’ ”

"No, I will not," cried Benedict, "but I would you had not shown that you have been so unhappy with us."

"Indeed I am sorry," returned Robert. "But I feel old here. Your life would turn me into a gravestone."

"Can you not stay and bear with us for another year?"

"I cannot," he replied. "Did you ever think how little there will be left to me after my youth is gone?"

"What can you mean?"

"I mean that I must not live as others do. I must live alone. I cannot marry."

"This is foolish."

"Not so foolish, Pater," said the young man, avoiding Benedict's eyes. "I have no name to offer but the one you have chosen for me—a name for convenience, but not my own. I want something of my own. I will not live lost in the world like an empty cask drifting in the sea."

Benedict was long silent. "What is your desire?"

"A name of which I shall not be ashamed. And if I had a son he could be proud of it."

"How vehement thou art! In the reality of life, the names of things matter little."

"And honor?" asked Robert, softly.

"Honor does not rest in the deeds of your father, but in your own. This name you bear is honorable because you have made us love and respect it."

"A name sullied before it was given me!"

The priest quickly retorted: "You wrong the dead. I have never seen this in you before, Robert Dinsmore, and I will not listen to it again. If there was wickedness, it was washed out in the agony of death when your mother gave you birth. You are young and intolerant; and judge with your head and not with your heart."

"I have had nothing to love; why should I have a heart?"

"You will find it, my son. But I do not like this bitterness. What right have you to judge your mother with a harshness you have never shown the worst women we have tried to help?"

"But my father—he showed little reverence for her."

"Man!" cried the priest, "judgment is not your right. Do not call its wrath down upon your head? I saw your mother. I touched her when the warmth had gone from her body but a little while. There could not be a face more fit to meet the eye of its Judge. There could not be sweeter purity, and I believe with all my soul that evil never lurked there. You have shamed her in this hour. You are an unworthy son."

Robert's head drooped, and a long pause followed, while the priest reviewed the cases waiting for him and balanced against them the need of the proud boy. Then he sat

down leisurely upon the grass and motioned Robert to a place beside him.

"You should have told me all this before," he said, gently. "How long has it been in your mind?"

"Always. Ever since I could think—before I left the care of Sister Clothilde."

When the priest next spoke there was unusual warmth in his rich voice.

"Lad, do you know how much I have cared for you? Do you never see that I choose your companionship in preference to that of my brothers? It is not my habit to show affection. A man grows hardened who lives alone. But, if I cannot express it so that you will feel it, you have brought into my life a happiness I never hoped to have. This is my life: I was the son of a wealthy baker of Provence. I was given an education and was sent to Paris to choose a vocation. I tutored in a family of high position. My charge had a sister. It goes hard to speak of it even now when years have sped away; when the hope of youth can never again make spring in my heart; when she is dead, and there is left me nothing but to live for others as I would have lived for her."

Robert leaned toward him with eager eyes and whispered:

"Pater—it was Sister Clothilde."

"How do you know?" asked Benedict, calmly.

"Because I remember waking to hear her crying very softly, whispering your name over and over."

The priest was so still that Robert thought he could hear the flutter of each leaf above him. In the silence he watched a sorrowful change in Benedict's face and saw with awe the moisture settle in the deep circles of his eyes.

"If I had known it," he murmured over and over, until Robert said, softly:

"Yes, Pater; what then?"

"She never should have entered the convent. I never would have been priest. Ah, well," he muttered, after an uneasy, wandering look over the austere lines of the monastery, "life is like that. Your supremest happiness goes like a cloud fading into the sky. It never comes a second time. You must satisfy your soul with the second best and pray God for contentment."

The most painful impression Benedict produced upon Robert was the hopelessness of one whose possibilities had all been tested, the boundaries of whose life had been set like unseen walls, growing higher and thicker, but never expanding. He recognized faintly, against the hope of his young heart, that there would never be a wide completeness. For a moment he was ready to sac-

rifice his plan and tread the still path of renunciation with Benedict. But a wind in the tree-tops, a sound beyond the walls, who knows what? stirred his pulses. The consciousness of hope and power grew big in his heart and youth, with its boundless aspiration, reasserted itself. Benedict had roused himself and was looking down upon his hand, which Robert still held abstractedly.

"Now you understand," he said. "It was my Louise (whom you knew as Sister Clothilde)—it was my Louise who discovered you at St. Cloud. It was she who put you in my arms and demanded protection for you. And so I have loved you as I never loved any other charge or comrade. You are the link between us. You will learn in time that the dead never seem dead to us. I always feel that she may knock at the gates some day and demand to see what manner of man I have made of thee. So you pained me when you showed what a gloomy life this has been to you, a life from which you are glad to escape."

Robert could say nothing. He knew that Benedict hoped for a response such as he could have given a few moments ago. Reading the reply in Robert's downcast face, Benedict changed his attitude with a sigh.

"I have told you that I cannot express myself in the natural language of affection because repression has been

my habit for so long; habit is strong. But I have given you to-day the best proof of affection a man can give. I have shown you my heart. That that is painful, you are not old enough to know. Put your hand in mine. (See what it is to pound one's heart into a habit—I cannot take it if you do not give it me.) So—to this nervous young hand you have given its task in life already, before your body has reached its full stature even.”

Robert felt that Benedict was bidding him farewell, and he rebelled as youth invariably rebels against finality.

“But it is not far to the Place de l’Opera.”

“You are mistaken. It is very far—all the way beyond the outermost circle of my duties. I may call upon you. But what is that? The communion of interest will never be the same. Still I cannot say, remain with me. I would not have you like myself when you are in your prime.”

“You regret the monastery exceedingly,” said Robert, with doubting wonder.

“Exceedingly. If it is a sin, I hope the sacrifice of my life will atone. If it will not, there are many others to suffer with me.” Robert crossed himself and the priest looked back at him with a smile.

“You are so young, Robert, with all your depth and all your power! But tell me now what in your heart of hearts is the thing for which you long.”

"For my father," he answered very low.

"Always the same thing—the quest of the impossible. Fame may come to you, as I believe it will, but I doubt if it will make you happy. You will wear your heart out seeking one man in a worldful. Can you not let it rest in peace?"

Such a look of wonder and reproach met Benedict's words that he sighed. "I forget that youth has always the right of it. Its impulse is nearer to nature. The wing of its hopes has not been broken. But come; show me your apartment, tell me your plans. Let me get into the current of it all, so that I may be glad with you."

So saying, Benedict rose and turned quickly toward the gate of the monastery.

CHAPTER III.

Youth—"The cup grows bitter as I drink."

Sage—"Aye, but the dregs are sweet. They bring oblivion.
So drink on." —Old Tale.

One morning, far into the winter, a young girl stepped from a cab at the door of the monastery, and, waiting for a reply, presented a sealed letter at the office to be sent to the Superior. As a result, word went to Benedict that he would be required to assume the charge of a young foreigner who had come bearing letters of consideration from the head of the college in Canada.

The Superior exhorted him to turn this young soul into the paths of holiness. Such an undertaking had never formed a part of his duty, and Benedict felt a decided repulsion to it. He went slowly to the office, where a young girl rose to meet him and followed to one of the rooms used for the reception of visitors.

When she was seated in the full light of the windows set high in the wall, Benedict noticed a bright serenity of face which spoke well for the serenity of her soul. She immediately opened the conversation in uncertain French.

"The letter which I brought to you, sir, told you that

I have come to Paris to study. My friends wished me to have the protection of your interest because I am alone, and I have presented the letter because I am in difficulty."

"I shall be happy to serve you."

"I feel obliged to change my pension for one less expensive, and I have come, hoping that you may know a French family with whom I can board. Perhaps I put you to too much trouble, monsieur."

"Not at all. I will easily find it for you. Are you quite alone here?"

"Quite alone."

"And you have no fear?"

"I see nothing to fear. It is not necessary to notice the people one meets in the streets," she answered with cool disdain.

"Have, you been here long?"

"For five months; but I know only what any tourist knows of the city. I am playing the violin for pleasure, but I may have to make it a profession, and I want to find a few pupils."

He was disappointed. The intrusion of wage-earning spoiled the romance which had crept into his mind at sight of her. He thought dubiously of the last time he had seen Robert at work in his small rooms, not making enough money to procure anything beyond his simplest

necessities, and not all of those. He spoke to her as he would to a penitent.

"My child, this is a serious, an almost impossible task for you to undertake. It will require a great deal to live properly, even with economy; and I think you know little of that," looking at her white gloves.

"Oh—those!" she exclaimed with a childlike laugh. "I have cleaned them three times. But you are partly right. My father has always made me a liberal allowance, but he is to be married soon—he will send me less."

"Why do you not accept the conditions of your life and return to your parents?"

"Accept the conditions?" she repeated. "I think we make our own conditions. I cannot see that we are bound to a treadmill because our fathers knew no better."

"If physical conditions seem trifling, there are moral conditions which you cannot set aside so easily. Does not your father need you?"

"I thought he did," she answered with a sudden rush of tears which she quickly brought under control and disdained to notice. "But my father prefers some one else to me, and my mother has been dead only a year. No moral obligation rests upon me."

She looked at the priest proudly, and he suddenly re-

membered that to her he was not a spiritual guide; he was only a man in an unmanly black gown.

"If you will allow me, I will call upon you in a day or two, when I have found a suitable family."

She rose and extended her hand cordially.

"It is indeed good of you to take the trouble. I do not believe the letter meant very much. It is all pure kindness on your part."

"You are mistaken. I am doing only my duty."

"I am equally obliged to you," she said quietly, and went away with an indescribable distinction of bearing which strongly impressed Benedict. He shrugged his shoulders as he returned to his room, thinking, "What an impossible task to overcome that independence of spirit and bring it within lines of submission to the church."

Rose Lloyd was but a girlish woman, young and impulsive. On returning to her pension, before removing her hat, she wrote a short, characteristic note.

"My dear, dearest father:

"How can you break my heart so by putting some one else in our home in place of my dear, beautiful mother? Don't you remember how she went about the house singing, and how she thought of the happiness of every one and remembered all the little things you liked and would never let any one else even darn your socks because they

might have knotty places? Don't you remember how pretty she was and how she shone at the Inauguration Ball? No, I cannot go home to your wedding. It is all wicked. You are as much married to mother now as you were before she died.

"Do not think I love you no longer because I say these things, that seem so undutiful. My heart aches for my mother and I cannot help it.

"Did you ever think she is looking at you? She often seems so near to me that she makes me turn about, hoping that I shall find her sweet face beside me. You love her, too, father. Tell me you love her still.

"Your loving, lonely daughter, ROSE."

She sealed the note with a sigh, inclosing the tears which had fallen on the page unnoticed. Her letter posted, she returned to her room to reconsider her position.

She was no longer mistress of her father's house; no longer heiress to his wealth. Her welcome home would depend upon hypocritical behavior. Her future would be made by the caprice of a woman she had never seen, whom she naturally distrusted.

On the following afternoon Benedict called to say that a friend of his living up on Avenue Jena would be pleased to take Rose into her home for six francs a day.

Rose walked a short distance with Benedict to a house

nearly opposite the Place des États Unis. It was low and white and prettily carved, with a large door opening in the centre upon a hall, long, and somewhat furnished.

An old garden could be seen through the glass door at the end of the hall, and several other doors opened upon it at irregular intervals, one of them masking a staircase. As Rose stood in the door-way a tall man stepped aside, looking with interest in her face. It was Robert, bound for rehearsal. Bowing to Benedict, he passed out.

Rose was soon settled in her small room at Mme. Blanc's. And with almost equal celerity she secured a few pupils and began an existence new to her.

Her days were so busily engaged that at first she did not notice with any uneasiness the absence of her father's letters. But when three weeks had passed her courage wavered.

A sense of impending misfortune grew in her father's unbroken silence.

Although Benedict and Robert saw her rarely, they both noticed the change that anxiety was working upon her.

Benedict had been reprimanded for his hesitation in obeying the orders of his superior, and came one day prepared to test the religious opinions of his charge.

She seemed weary and listened to his preamble list-

lessly. Finally she roused herself to pay proper attention. Benedict grew eloquent in his tribute to the beauty of the Catholic faith.

"It seems to me," she said at last, "that you worship your church and not your God. You ask what I believe. I believe in the commands of Christ which require neither churches nor gowns nor public prayer. Those are all I believe, monsieur." She rose, nervously listening to the postman's ring.

Benedict proceeded to show that the church had been founded by St. Peter, disciple of the Christ, and therefore carried with it the radiating power of God, being, by the same sequence, the only true church.

Rose could hear the facteur speaking in the hall and made no reply until he was gone. Then she turned a pale face to Benedict, saying:

"It has been proved, I think, that the gospels were not written before the second and third centuries, and the church was not established until it was wanted as a political tool by the Roman government. The early Christians were stoned and burned. Their church was the open field, their ceremonies were the cries of their hearts."

"A letter, ma'mselle," said Mme. Blanc, closing the door after her.

Seeing her father's handwriting, she opened the letter,

forgetting Benedict's presence, and read it through to the end.

Somewhat discomposed by the resistance Rose had developed, Benedict had stepped to the window and waited until her silence roused him from an uncomfortable reverie.

She stood against the wall, looking straight before her with blanched face and frightened eyes.

No words of Benedict could rouse her.

When he gently took her hand, clasping the crumpled letter, she exclaimed:

"No, no! You shall not!"

It was Robert who answered Benedict's call, bringing the first restorative to be found in the dining-room. Instinctively he knew that evil had befallen Rose.

She had shrunk from touch of the priest's hand, and was holding herself erect against the wall like a tottering child when Robert entered.

Without a word he supported her to a resting-place. Benedict stood aside, impatient with his own inefficiency, and listened with wonder to Robert's low voice.

From what unsounded depth of the young man's nature rose the ineffable tenderness of look and touch and word which won such sweet compliance. Finally on the still-

ness the voice of Rose struck low and clear with a studied care noticed by both men.

“As I was saying, monsieur, the ceremonies of the early Christians were the cries of their hearts. There was neither church nor Pope then. There was Christ and the love of him in tortured souls—no indulgences—no dogma—no confession to man—no sophistry. There were the soul and its God. That was Christianity. That should be Christianity to-day.”

Suddenly her calmness broke and she turned impulsively to Robert.

“Is there really then a God—a merciless God who destroys—an unjust God?”

Neither man dared answer.

She looked from one to another appealingly, then rose to her feet.

“I must be my own counselor, I see. I was foolish to ask wisdom of men when it is man who destroys. It is man who works injustice. But you have been good to me, both of you. Thank you very much. I do not mean to be pettish—but——”

She looked down at the letter with such sudden creeping pallor upon her face that Robert moved quickly forward to save her from falling. She smiled up at him a

little, and in a few moments went steadily out of the room, bowing to them as she closed the door.

Neither moved for a moment.

"What has happened?" asked Robert, sternly.

"I know no more than you. She received a letter—that was all."

"Then we can do nothing?"

"Nothing but what she chooses. I think the waters of oblivion have closed over the cause for us. We shall never know."

"I *will* know!" cried Robert.

"By what right?"

Robert made no reply. He went to the door of the stair-way. All was still. Seeing Mme. Blanc pass busily through the hall he intercepted her.

"Miss Lloyd is not well, I think. Go to her—not now—later."

Benedict had come from the drawing-room and nodded assent as he hurried from the house, immediately followed by Robert.

"The saints save us, but these foreigners are frail," she muttered. "There's nothing I wouldn't do for her—the dear child—pretty as a saint and twice as good. She's the sort for a man to worship. The good father looked

pale—now I wonder—Christ save us; it doesn't do to think." With that she closed the kitchen door sharply.

During that day and night Rose sat with the letter on her knee, concentrated in thought.

"My dear Rose," it ran, "since you prove yourself so obdurate and lost to all sense of gratitude, it is well that I should tell you the truth about yourself. Having no children, Mrs. Lloyd and I took you from a foundling asylum and brought you up as our own. It was her desire that you should know this from the first. It was my command that you should not. I did not want you running away because you might think yourself free. I counted upon you to be the stay of my old age. It will be well for you not to ask any particulars of your parentage.

"Mrs. Lloyd, whom I hoped you would welcome as your mother, very sweetly says that if you want a home with us you are welcome to it. She is a noble woman, and as beautiful as she is noble. She could teach you many arts and graces that would embellish you.

"Trusting that this will reach you safely and that you will now see the nonsense of your objections to my marriage, I am as ever your friend,

"THOMAS LLOYD."

This, then, was the real man she had loved as her father; this was the affection he bore her.

At first it was a relief to remember that she need not

return to him nor obey him. She could still nurse the comforting belief that her father may have been a man of noble mind, whom she could honor.

There was a phrase which had been erased from the letter. Examining it long and carefully with a magnifying glass, she at last deciphered the gross lettering, and dropped the sheet with a shudder.

"It will be well for you not to ask any particulars of your parentage. I should be sorry to cause you unnecessary shame and sorrow."

Rose looked down at the paper in terror. Could there be more to come! After long gazing at it as though fascinated with its evil, she burned it in the candle-flame and scattered its ashes into the heavy mist of the cold dawn.

Mme. Blanc found her crouched by the casement late in the morning and thought she had fainted. But, though her body was white and almost cold, her mind was busy with its problem, her heart was beating with anguish.

Rose Lloyd, she thought, a foundling of shame whose place among rightful men and women hung upon secrecy or a lie—this, the real Rose Lloyd.

There could be no home-going. She could not face the misery of her position as a disgraced object of charity. She must bury her secret with all she had loved.

A shamed existence was what she felt her life to be in

the first hours of yielding to the extreme conditions imposed upon her. Shame and wrong had risen out of the beginnings of her life and claimed her as striped with their stain. Her fervid imagination, at work upon her overwrought mind, saw them stretch their gaunt arms nearer and nearer to her until she would have cried aloud.

Her eyes refused the relief of tears. Her figure drooped like a wind-broken flower. The days passed, one like another, until their monotony grew to have a voice whispering in the silences, an unnamed companion strangely piteous. A dull prostration took possession of her and the days grew into months.

CHAPTER IV.

"Of what use their battling? Their nature's converge hymenward like rivers down deep water-courses. Give them let."
—Old Play.

On a day in December, Robert sought Benedict and asked to sit with him high in the tower, where he had woven so many wreaths of fair fancies. Here he could smoke and Benedict could stretch his length in a deep embrasure.

Far below extended the city, and out through clear vastness hung the rim of the horizon set in a mist of opals. The last months of separation had added a keen personal appreciation to their relations. They were glad to be alone in silence.

"Is life in the world still fair to you?" asked Benedict, dreamily, at length.

"Yes—it lures me into forgetfulness of my bugbears. There is saneness in its struggles and interests."

"Little time for brooding, I suppose."

"No time at all. Here a rehearsal, there a lesson, now a concert, next a call, then the great body of work for supremacy."

"You are working for fame?"

"I am not sure what it is I work for. Supremacy over other men, I think. It would be the same in any field for which I had a talent. I think I should like to land in politics, but this will do for the present. It is full of adventure. The only quarrel I have with it is that even moderate success seems to displace one from ordinary life in the imagination of most people. What is the use of that?"

"Then you don't like hero-worship?"

"Not of this sort. It is not the genuine hero-reverence which is the due of great men. It makes one feel small."

"What would you like?"

"To be let alone like other men."

Benedict smiled. "That may come some day, my son. Then you will wonder what's wrong with the world. But this struggle for supremacy puzzles me. I thought that art itself was your mainspring."

"No. If it were I would be my own audience and live by teaching. Whenever I hear a violinist of note, I mark all his perfections, intending to outdo them or, rather, to outdo him. I have a duel on my hands with every man above me."

"Egotist!" cried Benedict.

"I know it. But that is the way I was fashioned." The

fall of Robert's voice to a low tone when most serious came always as a surprise even to Benedict. "And still," he continued, more softly, "there is one person with whom I can never struggle, be life as long as it may, one person whom I can never rival—just one person in the world."

"The woman you love," said Benedict, promptly. Robert nodded in the silence through which they continued their thoughts.

"Has she already come?"

"N-no; but she will come soon; and I am afraid."

"Afraid?" echoed Benedict, incredulously.

"Seriously and deeply afraid. What rights have I—what position? Shall I ask her to exchange her name for such as mine? No. Can I hold my nature in complete control and never once call upon her unconsciously? Hardly—I am not a god. And, if she is the woman of life for me, then I am the man of her life. Can I trust to the littleness I am to save her from finding love in her heart? Scarcely possible. The greater she is by nature the more likely she is to stoop. In all this I am afraid. I seem to be preparing a catastrophe. I shall love but once—I wish with all my soul it could be put off!"

"It is a strange thing for you to be afraid, Robert Dinsmore."

"I know it. But it is not for myself. It is for her. I am afraid for her."

"Dream fears," murmured Benedict. "You should not heed them."

"I must. They are the shadow of Truth—a truth inexorable—born with me, to go down to my grave with me. I have no right to the love of any woman."

"Ah—this, then, is the devil pursuing you!" exclaimed Benedict, rising vigilantly erect. "Let us look at the trouble in the light of fact, not in the moonshine of fears. All evidence goes to show that you are a legitimate son. There is but one fact against it, and that can be explained easily by one of many possible accidents, such as the world's diary shows a crowd daily. Had your father fallen ill in a distant land he might have been forced to wait until the traces of his wife and child had disappeared—one in death, the other within the walls of a secluded sisterhood. In any case, he would have searched at the wrong address (the one in Paris, which your mother did not give Louise), and your mother's letter giving him her new address is the one we found without any superscription. Even the reference to secrecy in her letter, which at first seemed damning to me, is explicable upon other grounds, such as a runaway marriage—a union of which you would be a natural result with your fiery nature and high ideals

and ridiculous intolerance, your talents and intense affections; all these can be but the product of an unusual union. No mediocrity of persons or conditions had a hand in that. I would be willing to stake my future that you are legitimate. I only wish I could do it and settle the wretched business."

"I recognize you in that," interrupted Robert; but he failed to recognize Benedict in what followed and stared at him with changing color.

"There is another side to this question which cannot be evaded by a serious man, such as you were meant to be, a man who would quaff the best of life before the crystal is shattered. You know yourself to be a custodian for the race of what is best in you, for which you must give an accounting in the course of time—a few score years. You know that though there may be many above you in the grading of men, there is beneath you a horde unworthy a place beside you, low in their instincts, meagre in their attainments, who carelessly and wantonly people the earth until the current of life grows brackish with the stagnation which polutes its sources. These creatures propagate. You, and such as you, reserve your forces. You may live at greater ease in life, but at death you have lost your opportunity. You have forfeited your place among the forces of the universe. You are extinct.

To another I might not say these things. To you, I say—you have within you powers which belong to the race and not to yourself, powers which should come to fruition, not in you nor yet in your son, but a hundred years from now in one whom your country will need, in whom your dreamy ideals will be great realities. This you cannot evade.”

Robert looked the priest in the eyes with a mist gathering before his own, while the blood pounded in his temples. They stood thus, the wedge driven home, until Robert turned aside and Benedict said:

“I have distressed you. But you will forget and you will make your decision upon other grounds. My words will not come between you and the woman you love. You will forget them. But let this clear away now some vital misconceptions.”

Robert found further talk impossible. He silently took his leave and slowly left the tower of his dreams.

At first this conversation was much in his thoughts, but it gradually faded into the background, and at last disappeared over his horizon, which was constantly changing with the swift passage of events.

Spring was bursting the buds of the sunny, sheltered garden at Mme. Blanc's when Robert begged for an

audience with Rose under the green, blushing on twigs and waving vines.

At the time of the prostration which had fallen upon Rose after Thomas Lloyd's letter, Mme. Blanc had insisted upon her taking a large room opening from her suite, and it was from there that Rose came to join Robert in the garden.

As they faced each other, the heart of one leaped in its course with the shock of life and expansion. Rose stood silent in a lofty gentleness.

"I have asked to see you that I might beg you to be present at my début to-morrow at the Cirque d'Hiers."

"I am so glad for you."

"Thank you; but may I hope you will be present?"

"I—I do not know, monsieur. I have gone nowhere for many months. I am not sure of my courage."

"Do but lend me your courage for a few hours and I will find you interest."

"My interest will be there, I assure you."

"But I would so much prefer a glimpse of your face to a distant thought from you. I am not wholly unselfish; I am hoping for the inspiration you can be to me to-morrow—if you will."

"Indeed, there can be no inspiration for you in me,

since there is not enough there even for myself. I am a beggar in art, monsieur."

"Beggars in art wear crowns in the end."

"Crowns of thorns, perhaps, without the saintship to lend them grace."

"For all your scorn of the beggar in art, I would rather wear his rags than the whole skin of a clerk," said Robert, meditatively.

"Yet a clerk may happen to be blessed with a mind beyond his condition."

"Then he is a beggar, indeed. To possess a mind beyond your condition is to live within the gates of the Inferno. No—no! Give me freedom and vast power to enjoy the world's beauty. Give me the longing to add to that beauty. Give me the hope of success in that longing."

Rose remained silent, stirred by his enthusiasm.

"But you do not say that you will help me to-morrow," pleaded Robert.

"It cannot help you much to have so poor a thing as myself lost in an audience of many hundreds—one mind more to be swayed."

Robert looked down at her feet.

"But if I could stir your heart I should have stirred all."

She remembered to have felt the strange quality of that low voice before when its caressing power had been compelling, and she vaguely wondered whether resistance to it would be successful.

"I will go, monsieur. I have no reason to refuse your courtesy. But I beg of you not to count upon me for even a passing breath of inspiration. I am so frightfully negative now," she added, apologetically.

"Do you not suppose a magnet must always seem negative to itself? I will not thank you. I will show you what I mean to-morrow. Father Benedict will call for you. I hope it will not prove too tiresome an outing."

He bowed ceremoniously and left her standing bare-headed in the sunny garden, with a faint color rising to her shell-like face, the fairest memory to him.

On the morrow Benedict called for her in a carriage, and as they rolled down the Elysée in the golden sunburst of spring, Rose thought that life had never been so fresh and sweet and enjoyment had never been so keen.

Her spirits leaped to the sunshine; her heart went out to the children playing down the long avenues. She could have stopped to revel in Policinell in every nasal twanging booth; she could have kissed the flowers in every tiny plot and watched the tumbling fountains with any babe in the sauntering throng!

Spring was in her heart again. The love of beauty flooded over her sorrow like a freshening tide over blistering rocks.

Seated in the concert hall, the first stroke of the drums in the orchestra was a gladdening shock and fillip to her imagination, which stirred a host of thoughts that enlivened her face to exquisite beauty.

Robert came into the box and sat back in the shadow where he could watch the audience. But no lover of beauty could look beyond Rose to the host of ordinary faces crowding the circular audience chamber. He thought he could adore such a face, or, better still, could worship before it as before a shrine and make it the intermediary between his soul and heaven. What unexpected waves of expression passed over its lovely contours; how sweet were its soft lines and its brilliant eyes; how exceedingly the soul within must rejoice in its tabernacle.

Rose was leaning over the balustrade of the box with parted lips and eager solicitude when Robert stood out upon the small dais which was placed well before the orchestra and nearly in the centre of the auditorium.

She smiled upon him—and that was how Robert Dinsmore stormed the audience at his *début* with *Lamoureux*.

He cared nothing for its dictum to begin with. He was playing to Rose, and spreading before her keen appreciation every shade of art he possessed. The impetuosity of the first movement in the concerto he played was for her; the delicacy of treatment and tenderness of feeling in his adagio were for her; the élan and the magnificent breadth with which he delivered the finale sought her as their goal. The incense of a hidden love theme floated over the throng, hidden as well to him as to her.

The throng knew none of it. Each took to himself after his nature such beauty as compelled him, and every individual realized that a star was rising in the morning of its glory and drank the freshness of its dawn in deep silence.

When the ordeal was over, the wild enthusiasm of the audience made but slight impression upon Robert. He was now a prey to the most extreme diffidence and dared not lift his eyes to the box where Rose sat, bright with excitement. She waited through the next number for him to appear, then dispatched Benedict in search of him. Yet, when he came, she said nothing, but shyly held out her hand to him.

He bent low over it and lightly kissed it in the French expression of reverence. But the action was unaccustomed to Rose, and when he raised his eyes he found

her face blanched and still. He examined her in silence and instantly left the building.

Robert gave up his studio and begged of Mme. Blanc the small room which had belonged to Rose, pleading the necessity for economy, though his income had risen to a figure which was the despair of all other young artists in the field. But Mme. Blanc did not know that.

Rose had not seen Robert since his triumphant début, and the tenth day was dying, dying in the stately colors of a capricious spring day, when, going down the stairs, she met Robert ascending to the second floor with his violin under his arm, a bundle of books in one hand and a large cluster of roses in the other. He promptly sat on the step before him and eyed her quizzically.

"Good-morning, Miss Lloyd," he said, with the air of a boy caught in a scrape, "if you will deign to take these roses, I will remove my hat and pay proper reverence to my betters."

"I fear your reverence must be small if you need doff your hat to make it felt, monsieur."

"It is not for your feeling that I would take it off, but for my own comfort, since my reverence becomes so great at sight of you that it pains me."

Under cover of their laugh, she mechanically took his roses.

"There!" he cried, as he lifted his hat from his head, "now I can breathe, and I leave my roses in your hands for a great service. It is quite something to be rescued from suffocation, I assure you."

"You make me too much your debtor."

"It is I who am your debtor for all my recent successes."

"Monsieur!" she cried with remonstrance.

"I fear the truth is unpalatable. But your presence at my début was worth untold gold. It was glory and fame to me all in one short half hour."

"You bewilder me," she murmured from the roses in which she had buried her face. "You speak from a fairyland of upside-down. It is I who gloried, gloried more in my friend than in the success he won. It is I who have to thank you for an unusual, a deep pleasure. Indeed, I do thank you," she cried, holding out both hands.

The violin and the books and the hat and the roses found themselves comfortably on the floor together at the head of the stair as he took her hands slowly.

"And what are you doing here?" Rose demanded.

"I am looking for my room. It is somewhere in the sky, I believe."

"But you will never get there this way. There are no stop-overs on the road to heaven."

"That depends upon what angel comes in the way. I have an interesting score to show, if I may; a new work by Lalo. Do you lunch to-morrow at half after twelve? I will be there."

He started away, but returned to say soberly:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lloyd. I have not asked permission to lunch with you."

"Please come," she replied.

To lunch with Rose meant to sit apart by a window whose casements opened upon the quiet, spring-scented garden—to be served by pretty Babette, not fifteen, with saucy black eyes, and a complete subjugation to Rose. It meant to drift away on a sea of changing thoughts which touched, now far, now near, with a freedom possible only to minds nicely attuned to the world's interests.

Robert prolonged every pretext of the *dejeuner*, and afterward spread upon the table the score of the voluminous new work with a deliberateness which irritated Mme. Blanc, whose French sense of propriety had been severely tantalized.

Those were days of joyous daring to Robert; days of stress to Rose. She must constantly meet him and must constantly hear the splendid abandon of his playing.

Worst of all, she must sink herself to the most commonplace level to save her conscience. Her resolution was hard beset between his ever-encroaching nature and her own. But the habit of her mind held like a storm-anchor, and her deep-seated instinct of self-control steadied her, even when her faculties deserted her, as they sometimes treacherously did.

Rose found the struggle increasing to a tension which she could not support, and quietly prepared to leave the field.

June had turned Paris to paradise when she made her final arrangements to go to a small watering-place unsought by tourists and unfrequented by any one whom she would be likely to know, necessarily taking Mme. Blanc into the confidence of her new address.

It was the last night before she was to leave.

Robert had gone to an engagement. Mme. Blanc was out upon a gossiping tour.

Having finished her packing, Rose took up her violin and, for the first time since Robert's advent, played with unmuted strings. Her bed-room opened from Mme. Blanc's private sitting-room, which extended the length of the house from the street to the garden. Rose walked through it, playing in the half light.

Robert's engagement had been an early one at a soirée, which he immediately left after having played his part.

As he neared Mme. Blanc's on the wide, silent street, he was startled by the deep, full voice of a violin from the windows, open to the freshness of early night, and he stopped to listen beneath them.

With a man's sublime egotism, he had never given much consideration to her playing, and he listened in bewilderment. There was a quality in its grave sadness which moved to tears, a quality so poignant and pleading, so sweet and caressing, that it drew him nearer to her than he had ever been drawn before.

He entered the house quietly and went slowly up the stairs. The door of Mme. Blanc's sitting-room was open, and Rose was walking back and forth playing a Bruch adagio, which is sad and unresigned at best. It sobbed from her strings with a passion of grieving which held Robert by the door against his judgment. It seemed like a death when the voice cried itself into silence. Crossing to her, he exclaimed:

"What is it, Miss Lloyd? What hurts you so?"

"Nothing—nothing."

In stepping back she entered the light from the window, and Robert saw that her face was wet with tears still falling. They seemed weightier than a world.

"Let me share it."

"I cannot. Do please go."

"But how can I go? You are in trouble."

"No, monsieur."

"Yes, I feel it as I have never felt any sorrow of my own."

"If you would be kind, you will go away; you will forget. It is a woman's privilege to weep for trivial things."

How cold she could be. Robert stood silent, feeling in bitterness how near him the breath of communion was passing. She finally broke the silence sadly, but so guardedly that her very sadness seemed to place a distance between them.

"What I said was not true, monsieur. I was unhappy and lonely. Life seemed a task. There seemed no hope in it; no satisfaction, not much joy—it seemed just a round of necessity. And so you found me crying, monsieur."

Her proud constraint smote him; he answered suddenly, as though to some unspoken command and, to the beat of his low, vehement words, the funeral of her happiness seemed to pass in painful procession.

"I could have loved you. I did love you. But I will not. You shall have your way—you, and the chance

that made me. Chance! The distorted shadow of a God-like law; that is my tutelary. Under its watery, shifting star I was born, and my life will shift with it like sand in the tides, sucked up in one to be snatched back in another. Yet I must live it. I will lead it honorably; there shall be that grain of gold in the silt, though it enrich no one. In ugly truth, I am so far beneath what you should honor that I ought to apologize for having shaped events so that I might know you. I shall thank God for the memory of it. The thought of it will come to me in hard times, like water to a man thirsting. Oh, why did they not leave out my heart and soul when they made me! It would have been easy!"

Silence rose between them in the darkness, an intolerable barrier which maddened Robert beyond endurance.

"Rose!" he cried. "Rose!"

There was no answer. Nothing met his hands where she had stood.

He waited until the sound of Mme. Blanc's key grated through the halls. Then he went away, and in the morning he found that Rose had gone.

CHAPTER V.

“So she set him adrift on a sea of doubt
And never a word said she,
Till a Hell-dame tried his troth to rout
And the wind blows wide and free.”

—Rhyme of the Second Mate.

“Monsieur! Oh, monsieur!” cried Babette through the door one July morning, as she set the beaker of hot water down by the crack. “Come here just one little moment. I have something to say. Never mind your dressing-gown—I’m not afraid and madame is coming. Mon Dieu, but you are slow.”

Wrapping himself like a mummy Robert looked through the crevice.

“Yes, Babette.”

“I know something you would give your eyes to know,” she whispered.

“I do not doubt it. But why wake me up for that? It is not worth while.”

“Oh, yes; I know. You men always want the best of everything every minute of the time. If you sleep, the world must be dumb. If you eat, Paris must roll up its

sleeves to find you dainties. And, presti, if you love, nothing will serve but the sweetest creature under the sun. Fie!"

"In the name of man I beg your pardon, Babette. But my coffee grows cold and the steam grows less around that beaker down there. What is it?"

"I know the address of Miss Rose," she whispered.

Robert stood to attention like a man suddenly placed on parade.

"Shall I tell you?"

"Did Miss Lloyd give her permission?"

"Of course not, stupid! She knows nothing about it."

"Then I must refuse."

"Hey!" cried Babette in dismay. "You mean it?"

"That I do. And you ought to be well punished for your knavery."

"Then you don't deserve her. You are not worth bothering about. My faith! A man of sawdust! Do you suppose she would tell you? She went away just to see whether you would follow. I know."

"No, child; you do not know. Miss Lloyd is not like you. If she wished me to go to her she would say it before all the world. But she knows I cannot go to her. I have not the right."

"But, monsieur, are you then married?" Babette said, fearfully.

"No—I never shall be—that is all. Now run away like a good girl."

When she had retreated he called her back.

"Did you say that Miss Lloyd is well and happy?"

"I do not know," Babette answered, scared into the truth. "But I am sure she is not. She—she loves *you*, monsieur." Waiting for nothing more disagreeable, she threw her apron over her head and clattered down to the court in a storm of tears. After that Robert avoided Babette, played more incessantly and held his heart in closer durance than ever.

It was July in Paris and it was well for Robert to hold himself in durance. The opera had closed, throwing upon the boulevards and upon the provinces an army of artists, hungry for money, hungry for fame, but most hungry for pleasure. Among them was a ballet dancer who was anomalously rich and lived in a hotel on the Boulevard Haussman—piquant Saline, brilliant Saline with the trenchant wit—whose gay face was never seen but in the most approved places where honesty unwittingly elbows the world which lives in half light; Saline, who had come from a mountain home with a voice and a talent and an ambition for grand opera, and who, seeing

the ghost of failure and penury at her feast, had fled from it to the board of wealth and ease, gained at little cost.

With her there was always a something different from the rest, which lent her greater success—an indefinable reserve which clung to her from the air of her mountain childhood. It showed itself in an untamable independence which threatened at times to fling her from the heights of success, only to raise her giddily beyond them still higher up.

There was no doubt that she could retain that hotel so long as she wished. But how long would that be? There were bets upon it. Saline had been showing disquieting symptoms of late which were anxiously watched by those who tried to imitate her and who could not think complacently of foregoing the supper at her hotel.

She treated M. Vignaud with almost open contempt and M. Vignaud would surely resent it in time. Saline had contracted the ill habit of day-dreaming, and she returned in her day-dreams to the mental attitude of her young life, free among the mountains and pure as its air. Whether her day-dreams had come before or after having seen Robert Dinsmore at opera rehearsals, she neither knew nor cared. She saw in him a man fit to love a woman and to keep his love as something to be neither

flaunted nor sullied. In this mood she despised the men of her circle and treated them very badly.

One night at M. Vignaud's hotel, when the supper was nearly over and her guests clamored to be amused, she rose quietly in her place looking soberly into the stained bottom of her glass.

"Sing! Improvise! Make our hearts light!" cried M. Vignaud from the other end of the table, and Saline gave him a long, quiet glance.

"It is coming," whispered one.

"Is she not magnificent," muttered another. "What a pose!"

"Hush, she is about to say something."

Placing her glass on the table she began in a low voice:

"Friends, I sing you Love—Love whom you have never known, into whose eyes you have never looked—the love of the pure."

"Tiens! This is droll," said one under the uneasy stir.

"And so is life," she retorted, turning to the speaker, "and we know only the shabby half of it."

"Would she preach?" interpolated Yvette with a shrug.

"I could not if I would," Saline answered reproachfully. "You know it well, friend." After that there were no more interruptions. "I would sing the love which we and such as we have never known." Her eyes wandered

about the circle of expectant faces and the men grew exceedingly uncomfortable. "We nose about the path where it has passed, like hounds on the track of a being out of their class. We deck ourselves in its cast-off clothes and mimic what we think to be its mode. But is there one of us who would not flee from it like a pest if to be true to it meant to be poor? Let us not deceive ourselves; we have not known love. I have read of an affection of the mind and heart which brings peace to the tired brain, peace to the soul. Is there ever peace for us? I would sing that love, but I cannot. I do not know it. And you!" she exclaimed, turning with sudden passion upon the men, "you cannot know it either. You are more selfish than we are—worse than we are. But I tire you, and none of you understand me. I will sing you what I know to have happened." Sitting back in her chair carved like a throne, and nestling her head in a hollow of its carving, she looked away over the heads of her guests and presently began to sing, half remembering, half improvising her verses:

"Far in the slumbering hills, stands a hut made of stone
and of wood,
Where the wild, rocking winds wreak their wills, where
the menacing crags silent stood,
When a woman of sweet, laughing face, came to dwell
'neath their grim, stately grace.

Bleak struck the winds of December, black hung the
clouds o'er her head,
With the coming of life to remember and the dread of not
winning their bread.
For the hovering wings of Death's angel stretch from
heaven to earth o'er the crags.

Day after day passed, she singing through paths of the
echoing forest,
And night upon night heard the ringing of bells in the
cavernous west,
Where the souls of the forest take refuge with Death in
the hour of their rest.

Strong were the arms that she loved, tender the heart of
Craig Badeau,
Till the blight crept along his great body and hope for
his life flickered low,
And the babe in its cradle of fir boughs crooned soft to
the oncoming woe.

Still, through the shadowy byways, the mother passed
oft with a song;
Till the brown on her brow turned to silver and the babe
grew to maidenhood strong,
Took her way in the world for its silver and passed, God
knows where, in the throng.

And the mother with tearless eyes waits there, afar in
the slumbering hills,
For the crooning that laughed in its cradle, for the soul
that to love is now dead.
Hushed are the winds o'er her loving and still wait
Death's wings o'er the crag."

Yvette had crept to the singer's chair with eyes full of tears, and, after the sombre silence which fell upon them all, she asked timidly:

"Is she waiting for you still, Saline?"

The woman turned brusquely from her aesthetic vision to answer:

"Yes—she has everything she wants."

Yvette shrank back, murmuring: "If I had such a mother I would not stay here one hour." But the words were not heard in the clamor which again broke out to relieve the unprecedented seriousness of the situation.

"A dance! A dance, Saline! Come, this is unkind."

She petulantly ordered the table cleared. M. Vignaud held out his hand for her satin-clad foot and she sprang upon the polished surface of the table as lightly as a moth, to glide and whirl there like nothing else but Saline, the moth dancer.

With all this Robert had no conscious connection, but Saline had fixed upon him the gyves of an unthwarted will. For the first time she had come in contact with one who would not lower himself to her level nor abate one jot the rigor of his hardy nature. Somewhere in the unlighted places of her character, a vivid desire took life to possess what his nobler life represented.

She cared little for position, believing that the lives of

so-called good people must be deadly tiresome. But to possess his loyalty seemed a happiness beyond all others to the woman who had never been loyal, never having been loyally treated.

The mode of Saline's life was not likely to bring her in Robert's vicinity. But there must be ways, and Saline set herself to find them. The only one she could discover was through M. Vignaud, who knew Jean d'Escarte, Robert's former companion when they had rented rooms together early in the winter. She learned that his friend was to give a fête at his mother's house on the 14th of July. Robert would undoubtedly be there. M. Vignaud would be invited and must take her. M. Vignaud refused flatly. But he was so mercilessly treated that he yielded.

On the night of the 14th M. Vignaud escorted Saline to the fête in an unenviable state of mind. He was committing an unpardonable breach of etiquette and, even worse than that, he found Saline changed to so irreproachable a being on the surface that he knew there was devilry within. She could be amazingly beautiful, and to-night she looked a veritable grande dame. It relieved his anxiety somewhat, though he was not sure that she was not meditating a *coup de foudre*.

M. and Mme. Vignaud were announced. None of the ladies had ever seen her and received her with a flutter of

admiration. The men turned to look at Vignaud and soon gathered in groups in the foyers. Saline recognized none of them, passing on serenely to be presented to Mme. d'Escarte, who, being a widow, was supported by her son. As Jean d'Escarte saw her slowly approaching, his face became suffused with heat. So this was Mme. Vignaud. Should he present her? How avoid it? His mother was whispering:

"What a surprising creature, Jean! I used to see such beauty at court, but never since we have lived under a Republic."

"There is a very good reason why not," muttered Jean. The young man received Vignaud frigidly, saying simply:

"This is Mme. Vignaud, I understand."

Saline dared not cast a glance at him. She received Mme. d'Escarte's cordial greeting and watched the gentle manner in which the lady congratulated M. Vignaud upon his marriage.

"We never expected it of you, mon ami. You are wise." And then turning to Saline, "Your husband is an old-time friend, a much valued friend. I rejoice in his happiness, and I feel quite assured of your own."

Saline blushed appropriately, but did not trust herself to speak. All was so quiet and controlled that she felt muted, not daring to raise her voice. Yet she had time

to think: "After all, none of these splendid women know the men of their own families. It is we who know them." And this charitable thought enabled her to hold her head so proudly that many a woman truly great in prestige paled before her.

M. Vignaud was congratulated upon all sides, to his intense discomfiture, but he was congratulated by none so heartily as by Robert, who thought, "At last in his long career, this man has committed an honorable action." Seeing that none ventured to entertain her and recognizing the embarrassment of Saline's position, Robert went to her rescue, relieving M. Vignaud and placing her out of the throng.

"See what it is," smiled Saline, "to attain a position to which one is not born. These people all seem unnatural to me and I cannot recognize the men at all—they behave so differently. Do you suppose the women are always so tame? But they are beautifully gowned, quite beautifully. It is like living in a modern play perpetually at one of the *recherche* theatres. They talk very much like it."

Her topic was cleverly seized. Its frankness and naïveté were the only means she could have used to interest Robert, who saw in them a pathetic acknowledgment of her difficulties as Mme. Vignaud.

"Tell me what they are all talking about," she demanded, sweeping her eyes over the throng.

"That would be interesting to know. There have been recent events and scandals among the great people not present whom they all know. Most of the women are moved by rising virtuosi and some worship at the shrine of the new poets. Many are versed in political intrigue and are manœuvering this or that favor to gain advancement for their husbands."

"Eh, mon Dieu! And do none of them talk of love?"

"N-no. Not in public."

"They waste time," said Saline sententiously. "I can improve upon their methods vastly. Now—if I were one of them I should say to you, 'There is but one accident to-night which renders the dulness of this place bearable—and that is your presence. You shed the very atmosphere of love, and the hearts of women must be staidly schooled to run a steady pace when you are near.'"

Robert stared.

"Faith, you would very much surprise me if you said it."

"Oh, I could say much more than that, if I were one of them. I could say, for instance, 'Your hand lying on that dark surface and shining against it, is fine, fébril, supple; if it held my own I could refuse you nothing.'"

Robert

rose in confusion. "Tiens! how startled you are. But I am not one of them and I didn't say it of course—though I might want to. But let us be sensible as these cold creatures are. Our profession makes us too emotional. Sit down and talk to me as these people do."

Robert was growing nervous. Did she think St. Cecilia and Terpsichore visited in the same circles? He knew that she was shockingly beautiful and that most of the men would tell her so in one way or another. But he did not propose to, although he was uncomfortably sensible of the fact. While he was trying to think of some subject of mutual interest, Jean d'Escarte hurried up to whisper to him:

"Don't waste time here. Come, let me take you to Miss Lloyd; she has asked for you."

Robert started to his feet.

"Here—in this room?"

"Yes. My mother met her at the American Ambassador's on the Fourth and she is to play for us to-night. She has asked for you."

Robert remembered his surroundings sufficiently to bow with a murmured apology and followed the direction of Jean's nod.

"Another début," he thought. "I hope Miss Lloyd is not nervous. I wish they would let me play in her stead

—it is such a beastly sensation to stand before the crowd, and I hate their looking at her. Not a man here is fit.”

But she was talking pleasantly with several of them, tall, cool and gracious as a forest-flower.

“I fear M. d’Escarte interrupted you,” she said, as she gave him her hand and, turning, Robert saw superb Saline alone in full view from where they stood. “I did not know you had arrived when I asked for you and I will not detain you. I only wanted to ask if you happen to have a mute in some pocket. I have either left or lost mine.”

“I always carry my implements,” Robert answered, producing the mute, “and as for Mme. Vignaud, whom you see, I escorted her there and gave my time to her because no one else dared.”

“How strangely you speak.”

“Nevertheless, I speak justly. Now M. Vignaud himself must care for his wife. May I look your instrument over to be sure it is ready?”

Finding nothing out of order, he took Rose to a lounging corner of the ante-room, placing pillows behind her in a restful corner and drawing a chair near.

For a moment he was overwhelmingly conscious of her face as he had seen it in twilight, with the glisten of tears upon it, and of the sense of loneliness which had swept

over him later, when he had found emptiness where she had stood grieving. Consciousness of that hour had also risen to Rose. But they looked at each other gravely as though over an agreement signed and sealed, and both tried to forget. Dropping his eyes, he said:

"We have missed you at Mme. Blanc's. The life of the house went with you and we feel and behave like resuscitated mummies. Babette threatens to leave if we cannot persuade you to us again. We will be very good if you will return."

"You were too good—that was why——"

"Why you left? I do not understand."

"I am not good myself—always," she admitted.

Perhaps it was foolish, but at this small admission Robert's heart bounded over the agreement, signed and sealed.

"Did you go because I worried you?"

"I am afraid I did."

"And you disliked me?"

"N-no. Oh, please——"

"Please let you alone?" She nodded with embarrassment, and Robert questioned her eyes, the question dangerous through which souls come suddenly upon each other and quiver in the radiance for one long moment. She first drew her glance away with a sense of having dipped in a sea of measureless delight, and after that

neither knew what was said or whether any words lay between them. Jean came hesitatingly toward them, having seen that which is unmistakable in the face of a man's friend, the sheen of the soul's radiance, the something before which every man feels himself small.

"My mother is coming to ask if you are rested, Miss Lloyd, and I am here to ask whether I can help you in any way when you are ready to play for us."

"Yes, I am quite rested, thank you—quite rested."

Robert handed her the case. She soon had been escorted to her place and Robert had drifted back into the crowd to a point from which he could watch her.

Where had she learned the trick of loving which displayed itself so unexpectedly in the finish of phrases, in the soft diminuendos drooping into tender melody half audible, in the rush of crescendo with which she mounted to a satisfying finish of generous sound, and there paused in full tide as though to her heart there could never be an ebb. Where had she learned it? Robert dared not ask himself. And had he dared, the moment was too full of the inexplicable to brook explanations.

"I am lost," he sang to himself, "drowned in her. I seem to be asleep a million fathoms deep. At least, I will not cause her to seem ridiculous. Go home, you in-

fant; the man in you has gone laft. He has the divine madness. Oh, Rose, how the god of love sings in you!"

Meanwhile Saline had concentrated her faculties in an examination of Rose, who was a new specimen of womanhood to her.

"That is the sort the novels are written about," she commented. "I wonder why. She could be more beautiful if she only knew or cared; but she could not be more entrancing, I will admit. And she plays—mon Dieu, how she plays! What would I not give to dance to her playing! The world would be at my feet. It shall be done." Saline sprang up and started across the floor with enthusiasm to embrace the young girl, crying, "Brava! Brava! Artiste! Virtuose!" But, midway down the room d'Escarte met her with an interrogation between his brows, and, placing her hand on his arm, he turned her into the supper room.

She flashed her blazing eyes upon him and, at sight of her, the servants silently left the room.

"Why did you stop me?"

"When you have told me why you have come here I will carefully explain why I could not permit you to intrude yourself upon that lady. Shall I do so?"

"How interestingly prudish! Might I not find a rea-

son why you also should not intrude upon that lady? Shall I carefully explain that to her?"

D'Escarte reddened. "At least I know enough to be ashamed of myself. While you——"

"Ah, I see. You demean yourself in two ways. You behave properly when women are so good that they force you to it and, when that becomes tiresome——um—we are there. And yet your virtue is outraged at sight of one of us in your seasons of propriety. Which is nearer being honest, do you think, the highway robber or the secret felon? Why am I here? That is my business, my pleasure. Why do you ask yourself to M. Vignaud's hotel? That is your business. Between us there is little to choose. Do you think I would harm that innocent child? A little more and you would make me wish it. But, man-scoffer that you are!—there is one white corner in my soul and a pure woman is enthroned there. I wish to go away."

In all submissiveness and sackcloth of spirit, Jean conducted her whither she bade him and felt, when she had departed, that after all he had a very slight acquaintance with virtue, and that he had no understanding whatever of women, particularly of the evil sort.

CHAPTER VI.

All roads lead on through the Door of Life, and to the good
all roads are seemly. —Drift of the Border Lands.

Rose slept little that night, and the next day sought her home in the gray house by the sea, hoping that its monotonous walls on the sandy waste would revive her sense of the true values of her life. She wanted to feel its limitations and to be strong in them.

She wanted to regain oblivion of the joy which had been quickened to life against her will, almost without her knowledge, in a look. One long, quiet look; that had been all. What folly that whole years of life should tremble in its irresponsible power! What worse than folly that, against her will, joy should still throb where her moral determination denied it the right to exist. She thought the sea would help her with its beauty and grandeur and loneliness.

But the waste was an alluring glory when she came to it at sunset. The irregular gray house wore a welcome like some homely, kindly face. And the sea was arch-traitor in its long, limpid swell of lovely color and lazy motion, as though gladness of being were all, as though

the universe knew no law but the law of delight. Over all a fresh wanton breeze, sweet with the breath of grasses, played from inland in the tenderness of evening. Then the stars came. The night song of the heavens echoed in faraway diapason to the listening ear of her soul. The puritan within her faded into its own shadow to bide its time.

It would be no sin to love, when loving did not harm its object or any other being. Had she reasoned—but who reasons when the soul has risen from its depths to claim the being it knows for its own? What heart can measure the ground it has passed, back to the point before disclosure, and return itself to what it was?

The house on the sands had no power to hold her to a fancied duty. The sea had no voice in its warm, sun-kissed level to murmur of super-morality. The sand and the sea and the sky were nature, and, to their utter naturalness, Rose was at last reduced to own the magic of the laws of her being. The man and the hour had come. They had closed one door of life to her and had opened another.

A week from that day Rose received a scented note from Mme. Vignaud asking her to entertain a few guests at her house the following night, mentioning a goodly sum, and asking her to remain until the following day.

Rose reached Paris the next evening at eight o'clock and drove to the Boulevard Haussman, expecting to be late. But the house was quiet and expectant, and she was shown to a dressing-room richly appointed, where Mme. Vignaud greeted her, taking her wraps and sending away the maid.

"You beautiful little thing," she exclaimed, framing Rose's face between her hands. "I am so glad you are here. No one will come for ages (they are always late, and Mimi has quarreled with—but that's another matter). The great thing is, we can talk. It is warm. Will you take a sherbet and an iced cup now? Have you dined? There will be supper afterward, of course. No wine? Then a cup of tea. Now, lie down and rest. You *are* pretty! All the lines of your body are so fine and yet so pretty."

As Rose sat up very straight Saline exclaimed anxiously:

"You don't mind my saying that, do you? It's true and you can't help it, and you ought really to be thankful. I would give my height and what they call my splendor in one moment for your fineness—it is so deeply attractive, that fineness of yours. Now," she exclaimed, walking before a great mirror, "I haven't at all what would seem to

me real beauty, if I were a man. It is you have it, and, of the two, it is you I should love."

She turned from the reflection with a grimace and encountered the pair of wide-open eyes fastened upon her.

"You don't like what I say. But it does no harm. I am terribly frank, gauche, I know: but it is all true. The trouble is we are afraid of the truth. I might be jealous of you—but, bless you, I am not. I should simply adore your beauty very soon—perhaps I do already."

"My dear Mme. Vignaud, please do not say such things. They are excessively uncomfortable. It seems to me a poor topic."

"I suppose it is," said Saline, meekly sitting down. "May we talk of something else? How do you like Paris? Are we as bad as you expected? I would really like to know. You seem so different from us. Are all Americans like you?"

"How do you mean?"

"Are you all serious and self-contained and tantalizingly pretty, and do you all tell the truth?"

"Why do you think I tell the truth?"

"You can't help it because—well—because it is you."

Rose concluded that she had to do with a woman who had never left her childhood, but answered as politely as she could:

"American women are very nice and they are simpler than you are, perhaps more truthful, but their manners are, as a rule, not so pretty."

"You have perfect manners yourself, and that is odd in a young girl."

Rose was doubtful whether to be amused or ashamed. For a time conversation languished, while her hostess grew nervous with the feeling that time was passing and that her opportunity, too, was passing. Yet she found it hard to speak. At last she nervously patted the bed near the aristocratic hand resting there and asked slowly:

"Do you think women who—who are not good are very bad?"

Rose hesitated.

"I mean bad women," said Saline, doggedly determined to be understood.

"I think they are pitiful."

"Pitiful!" exclaimed Saline, proudly.

"Yes; pitiful," insisted Rose, rising quickly to defend her standard. "Who loves them? Who shields them? Who honors them? Without these things a woman seems better out of the world: she seems to be worth less than any other kind of creature." Saline drew breath quickly. "All animals have their place and serve some good end.

But a bad woman—she saps the strength of the race; better a ghoul that lives on the dead.”

“Ach!” the woman cried, springing up with her hands before her eyes.

“What is it, madame? Have you a headache?”

“No—no—a spasm. That is all. Go on, I am waiting.”

“There is nothing more.”

“Nothing more? You would not punish them?”

“Poor things! How could one punish?”

“But they are *not* poor,” Saline excitedly exclaimed. “They are rich, petted, better dressed, better cared for than good women. Show me as many wives as carefully attended.”

“I hope you are mistaken. But, if you are not mistaken, your nation is waning.”

Saline stopped to wonder at the dictum and asked an explanation.

“It is very simple. When good women are not first in the hearts of men, a nation has already lost its manhood. Inertia creeps upon it, and then come disgrace and disruption.”

“How do you know?”

“There have been other nations before yours and they crumbled in the same way.”

"But I thought it was through invading armies and that sort of thing."

"A nation of strong men and good women does not fear invasion," said Rose with a touch of scorn. "I would like to tune my violin, madame."

"Certainly. We will go down, but it is still early."

"It is nearly ten o'clock."

"It does not matter. No one will come, yet."

They found the drawing-room ready, the supper-room inviting beyond, the servants in their places, but no guests. Rose had tuned her violin, and was trying her fingers, when a startling clamor of voices rose loudly without the hall.

"Will you go upstairs, please?" said Saline nervously. She began to fear the situation and to question whether she could make the wild hearts behave. There was much laughing and whispering below stairs, and finally a calm into which Rose came seeking Saline. The latter, waiting to receive her, appreciated the exquisite simplicity of her dress and the distinction of her genuine unconscious beauty.

"I am ready, madame."

A man was seated at the piano, turning the leaves of her music. When she had made her choice, Rose looked about her with sudden apprehension, and closed her eyes

to give herself to her music for comfort. She had twice played before she could overcome a sense of strife and enigma. She tried to think of other faces than the hard, glaring masks which she felt fixed upon her. One of them tittered constantly behind her fan, to whom Saline moved noiselessly, remarking over the woman's shoulder:

"Once more, little fool, and the door will be opened for you. See if you can behave like a woman for once." And again to another: "Would monsieur prefer the smoking-room? There will be no talking here until m'amselle has finished." So she whipped them into submission, and at last the room was quiet.

Then the strangeness of the company rose upon the heated air and filtered back into the imaginations of both men and women until, to some, there were voices of denunciation whispering in the pauses and, to others, the terrible phantom of thought arose and demanded entrance to the locked chambers of their brains, where their minds were stifling—a rare form of torture. Over their heads the breath of the violin passed in unearthly purity, and at last all else was still.

Rose had forgotten them. She had conjured to her aid a vision of sunlit sands and heaving sea. She had passed the narrow boundaries of the low and mean into the unbounded Land of Dreams, where perfections have

their birth. Here there was peace, and from her peace profound she played to Saline's wild beasts.

M. Vignaud entered unnoticed. Standing by the door, he looked from Rose to Saline, and glanced attentively over the room and back again, then quietly waited with a dark flush crimsoning his face.

Rose finished in a dead silence, with a dizzy sensation of falling as she looked about her. M. Vignaud walked down the room without noticing any one and offered his arm to Rose with a stately bow.

"You have done us too great an honor, mademoiselle. If you will allow me, we will go where there is refreshment. I imagine you have been playing a long while. Some are thoughtless. What I heard from your violin just now told of a higher life than this." Saline rose to meet him, but he passed her with few words. "Not yet, madame."

"This is scandalous!" exclaimed Yvette. "Before Saline's very eyes!"

At the door-way of the dining-room M. Vignaud turned a benumbing glance at them over his shoulder. No one dared follow. There was only a whispered stir in the large room while its occupants watched the comedy through the doors. They had never seen M. Vignaud

do the honors of his house, and an actor present watched him with absorption.

"Dame!" he muttered. "The old reprobate knows what deference and dignity and simplicity are. If I could but copy him for my next rôle!"

Saline was enraged. All her better aspirations were charred in the conflict; but she dared not move, not knowing where safety lay.

"I don't understand," said Yvette, helplessly. "Can't we go away, Mimi?"

"No, no—stay. I wouldn't miss it for worlds."

"I am afraid," she whispered.

"Nothing will happen to you. You have done nothing." Other women were waiting to witness something cataclysmic, but Yvette was always the most innocent of them all.

In the quiet dining-room M. Vignaud was saying:

"I have a strange request to make, of which I hope you will ask no explanation. I suppose madame has asked you to spend the night here?" Rose assented. "If you have any friends in the city, I wish very much you would allow me to send you to them." Rose sighed with relief:

"Thank you. I would much rather go." Then she looked her apology.

"You relieve me of a great anxiety. As you may understand at some future time, I am not an exemplary man, but until this night I have never seen myself in my true colors and I have you to thank."

Although Rose gave him her undivided attention, appropriating what she could from his face and manner, she had no comprehension of his meaning. M. Vignaud was perplexed and at last, as she was rising, he exclaimed earnestly:

"Promise me that you will never recognize any of the men and women you have seen here—under any circumstances."

Rose looked down at him much startled.

"Never, mademoiselle—I beg of you."

"But why?"

"They are not real."

"But the accompanist——"

"Is no musician. He is a sham, like the rest."

"What is it, then? Do speak so I can understand. What are they?"

"They are not good—that is all."

"But Mme. Vignaud!"

"Is not Mme. Vignaud. I have no wife."

Rose showed only in her varying color that she understood. She looked over the room at Saline with a long

glance, saying, at last, as she drew a deep breath that was like a shiver:

"I think she did not mean any harm. Now I must go. You will take me to madame, please. There is no need of her knowing that I understand."

M. Vignaud obeyed. As they came near, Saline affected not to see them until Rose stopped before her.

"Adieu, madame. I shall spend the night with my old friend, Mme. Blanc."

Saline lost her rage for an instant as Rose took her slender, morbid hand in a lingering clasp. There were many things Rose would like to say, now that she knew, and yet she felt that no words could help.

Why had the woman asked her? Was it morbid fancy, or overweening pride, or was it a longing for help? She felt she would never know. A glimmer of the cause struck her as she noticed how Saline's eyes softened under her own.

She had an impulse to examine the wild beasts one by one, but they were different from Saline and would leave only cankerous memories, excepting little Yvette crying in the corner.

With every moment the atmosphere grew more dismal until Rose went away with downcast eyes. With her

wraps on at the door, Rose looked up pleadingly to M. Vignaud.

"Can you not help her?"

"I!" Then he said, gently: "It is useless for us to talk of it. You will never see this side of life as it is. There is no one from whom she would scorn help as she would from me. A long time ago you could have won her over, but now—shun her! Shun her like a plague. She is a destroyer."

Rose was too tired for further remonstrance. She raised her face to make one more plea, but it was chilled on her lips by sounds within the house which rose suddenly upon her and hurried her from the door. Having closed the carriage and having given his coachman explicit directions, M. Vignaud re-entered his house, where pandemonium now reigned. With a frown upon his face, he called Saline to him in the hall.

"Send these canaille home," he commanded.

"What?"

"Send them home."

"But supper——"

"Let them get their suppers at the cafés where they belong."

"Oh, Henri—no-no-no," she murmured, touching his hands with adorable gentleness. "You are angry, and I

am sorry. Indeed, there has been no harm done to Miss Lloyd."

"No," he returned shortly, "because you could not. But these beasts of yours—faugh!"

"Now, Henri, come in and see how amusing they are. Mimi is so droll—we are going to dance, and I have a new figure to show you, and such a marvel of old wine for the toasts. Now, come, dear Henri." The siren could caress a man's resolution into utter subjection. But, at this moment, M. Vignaud was still strong with the purity of another influence. He put Saline's hand away from him and slowly reiterated:

"Send them away. The police will be here in twenty minutes from now."

She blanched at the word.

"But why?"

"That is my business."

Her face changed. She crept away from him and slowly gained the door of the drawing-room, with her eyes fixed fearfully upon his. When out of his sight, she ran to the crowded supper table, exclaiming breathlessly:

"Yvette, Mimi, everybody—you must listen! M. Vignaud will have the police here in twenty minutes. I think I hear them now. I don't know who it is for; I don't know who has been doing anything. But you must go—

this instant. Nothing shall happen to any of you while you are here, I promise. Only go."

Leaning forward against the table, on which she beat her slender hands in feverish excitement, Saline was the picture of fear.

Every one looked at his neighbor and none knew who was the felon. Amid endless confusion the men and women hurried into the hall to pass out under the fire of the ironical adieux of M. Vignaud. They fairly tumbled from the hôtel upon the sidewalk and scattered like mice.

Saline stood dejectedly before M. Vignaud.

"Is it for me they are coming?" She swung her hands out sideways and clasped them before her nervously. "I don't know what I have done. I suppose you do."

The master of the house was heartily sorry for the erring, impulsive woman. The jewels flashing bravely on her splendid throat, the soft silk of her bodice, hardly moved by a breath, the richness of all she wore, were so unfit a setting for a woman who had sold herself to the police of Paris.

There was a sharp ring of bells in a distant part of the silent house, and the servants admitted two gendarmes, to whom M. Vignaud said lightly, looking at Saline the while:

"A mistake—a bad mistake—but you shall not lose your time. Make them comfortable, Santo." The factotum of the hall took them and their thanks to the servants' quarters.

Saline sank upon a chair, burying her head in her arms, and, from a distance, M. Vignaud surveyed her.

"This is a painful situation to which you compel me by your folly and your senseless ambition. The moment you presumed to turn my house to such ends as I have seen to-night, you placed yourself without its doors. I cannot expect you to understand how black this action of yours is. You do not dream how fearful a thing it is to blast the life of a young, defenseless girl as you would have done. Your own life has been so wicked that you are too callous even to perceive it. If I could help you I would. But you are hating me this moment." She shook her head.

"No? Then let me see if you are in earnest. If you will leave the country, I will see that you have an honest start anywhere you choose."

For a long time she was silent, so long that he thought she might have fainted. As he came near she turned a flushed, eager face to him.

"Will you marry me?"

“Dieu!” The recoil of his body and his indescribable accent of horror were an all-sufficient reply. Saline rose.

“I understand you, monsieur. I have wronged neither you nor any one that I know. I am what I am; you should be the last to twit me with it. You wish me to leave your house. I will do so—not to-morrow, but now. Let your servants pack what I possess. The articles are all in the bureau and the wardrobes of my room.”

“As you please. For the first time I respect you.” She flushed painfully.

“When I ask for your respect, monsieur, you may offer it.”

The man felt his resolution evaporating under those proud eyes. It was hard to let her go. It grew harder with every moment. He walked the hall uneasily, not daring now to look at her.

“Where will you go?”

“I have my friends. I have my rooms. They have been waiting for me.”

“But not to-night—you won’t go to-night. The dark is beastly. I don’t want you to go from my house in this way.”

“You are gallant, monsieur. You wish me to leave, but not too roughly, not in such a way as to hurt your

sensibilities. Unfortunately, I have sensibilities of my own—a few.”

Freed from the horrid fear of the police, Saline came to herself sufficiently to feel once more her indomitable independence. As usual, it shed a sort of majesty about her. M. Vignaud came quickly toward her.

“Forgive me,” he exclaimed, “and I will ask you to stay.”

“No! Not for a million; not even for the respect of such an irreproachable man; not for this and that and all your palatial house.”

As she spoke she drew the jewels from her neck and arms and tossed them on a table.

“To be free again! To choose where I like or not at all! To fear no master of the house! To be myself. Oh—Liberty!”

He had lost her. She already looked upon him as one of the ornaments of his hôtel, and soon he was mortified to see that she had forgotten his existence, her eyes bent upon an imaginary goal, her brows gathered in concentrated thought upon some new departure upon which her ready wit had already embarked.

Soon it was she who walked the hall, and it was M. Vignaud who waited, endeavoring to stifle his regrets and vainly trying to recover the moral strength with which he

had acted but a short half-hour ago. But it was gone. It had been little more than a smoldering ember fanned to burning activity by the breath of another.

Saline's effects were brought to her by two weeping maids, one of whom insisted upon following her fortunes, with or without wages, and altogether, women, bundles and trunks, they were placed in a cab and were driven away from the hôtel on the Boulevard Haussman, as the clocks were striking the early morning hour.

At the same time Rose bade Mme. Blanc good-night, after an explanatory chat, and mounted to her room. As she was about to turn the latch a disheveled object flew up the stairs and dropped at her feet with half a laugh and half a sob. Babette cried:

"It is M'amselle, dear M'amselle. I thought it was the saints when I heard your voice."

Here the child lapsed into incoherence as Rose drew her to her feet and kissed her warmly on either cheek.

In his room above Robert heard and wondered anxiously what chance had brought his beloved to the house at so strange an hour, and continued to ponder over it for half the remaining night, while M. Vignaud, in his costly hôtel, paced from room to room, memory filled, haunted with a vivid presence, false and unstable but glorious, until the dying night gave way to the dull day.

CHAPTER VII.

Slave.—“Here, Sire, comes one that would walk straight, but is crooked.”

Khalif.—“Not Allah himself can help him, let him first be born again.” —Arabian Tale.

Saline also pondered. As the early dawn spread through the streets, her maid ran to the nearest pneumatic tube and dropped a note into its mouth, which was delivered to Robert a few hours later on his breakfast tray by Babette in the whitest of aprons and with the freshest of smiles. As he spread his napkin and took a long breath of the fresh morning air blowing through the window, Babette rested her hand on her hip, a gesture always preliminary to important news. She mysteriously said:

“Something divine happened last night.”

"Yes?"

"Yes; something heavenly."

"You went to confession?"

“Now! That is stupid. But I *was* kissed by an angel.”

Robert studiously examined his rolls.

"I did not know you were fiancée."

"What a canard," laughed Babette, circling about on

Lacy

one heel. "It was Mlle. Rose, that dearest, loveliest lady. And she is so sweet to kiss. You have no idea."

"No, I haven't," growled Robert, burning himself.

"And you ought to have seen her. She wore violet, and nothing on her neck and arms, all round and pretty, but lace like cobwebs. She was a queen picture—and the prettiest slippers! (I think they were violet, but Mme. Blanc says not.) And—and that was all. But her dress seemed to love her and showed her all beautiful. I shall never forget, with the candle light round her head like a saint, and her eyes looking down into mine so soft-like."

"Babette, go down stairs," ordered Robert.

"But I want to tell you."

"No."

"But I want to."

"I can't help that. Go—down—stairs. And, Babette—stay there! Don't come telling me any more."

"But, m'sieur; I knew she was thinking of you."

"Dame! *Will* you be quiet."

"No; I won't. She is in the garden now, and she wants to see you."

Holding her by the shoulders, Robert cried:

"How do you know?"

"Because——"

"Well—because?"

"Because—but I won't tell you." With that Babette whisked out of the room, and in five minutes Robert had finished his toilet and was entering the garden, hearing a whisper from Babette behind the old stair.

"M'sieur! Madame's gone to market."

Rose was lingering among the flowers and did not see him until he was before her. She sustained his look for a brave second, then dropped her eyes in a confusion which paid tribute to their last meeting.

"I am intruding, Miss Lloyd." She shook her head.

"Then I may stay?" Her look assented and he walked on by her side without speaking until she remonstrated:

"Silence is hard to bear."

"Between friends, yes. Is it because silence means so much? The heart seems to turn traitor in silence and tell what one dare scarcely think. That is why I prize silence. I think you know me best so."

"But I have no right—I dare not."

"Can you help it? Do you not already know me, and are not some of my faults already familiar to you?"

"Indeed, I do not know your faults."

"I think you do. There remains much you do not know. But some day I shall be compelled to tell you all I try to keep to myself."

"But, why?" she asked, troubled.

"Because I cannot keep certain things to myself when your eyes are upon me."

"I pray you, monsieur."

"Then I will be silent."

She struggled with his quiet presence, asking nothing, claiming nothing, yet taking all, until the clatter of Babette's sabots released her.

"I must go. Perhaps we shall not meet again."

"That could not be."

"At least it will be a long time."

"That *must* not be." He acquitted himself well of the task of formally holding her hand and of quietly letting it go. But he fulfilled only the letter of the law.

When from his window he had watched her drive away to the station with Babette and Mme. Blanc, he turned about with a remembrance of something left undone. It was an hour before he could recall what it was. Then he looked for the scented note which had been tossed aside.

"Monsieur," he read, "a cruel fate has overtaken me, and I turn to you for assistance, not because I would trade upon so slight an acquaintance, but because, for some indefinable reason, I trust you. You are M. Vignaud's friend. You can help me if you will. There is little to call me abroad to-day. I will wait your con-

venience, but I beg you to come at any hour that suits you—but, at least, to come.

“Accept the assurance of my greatest esteem and believe me forever your friend, Saline Vignaud.

“Pray destroy my note.”

“How tiresome!” muttered Robert. “There has been a misunderstanding, and the disinterested friend is requested to appear. I hate such things. I can go at five o’clock, and I suppose I must.” But at five o’clock callers arrived, followed by his agent, who remained to dine with him, and it was after eight o’clock before Robert was free. The dinner had been a good one, the news brought by his agent had been exceptionally bright, and Robert was inclined to be indulgent, even to a disagreeable duty.

He went to the address Saline had given and found her in a marvelous apartment, gowned as she had been the night before. She was pale, and her eyes burned brilliantly, but otherwise she bore no signs of distress, excepting that she seemed intensely reserved and intensely alive.

“Indeed you are good. (Take monsieur’s things, Louise, and leave us.) I have to go out shortly, but perhaps you will accompany me and finish on the way. You do not know how I appreciate this. Why did I write you? Because I trust you. You have a heart of gold.

Sit here, please, I want you to hear all." Robert took the chair beside her and for a moment she leaned back among the cushions of the divan with closed eyes, as though concentrating her thoughts, a repose in which she was certainly fair to see. Finding him regarding her curiously, and keeping her eyes steadily upon his, she asked:

"Is it the custom in the *grand monde* for men to discard their wives for other than serious offense?"

"Most assuredly not."

"What do women of the world do in such cases?"

"They return to their families, I presume."

"But I have none."

"My dear Mme. Vignaud, I trust nothing so serious has occurred."

"But it has. Monsieur sent me away last night."

"At night?"

"At one o'clock or after."

"You shock me."

"I thought perhaps it was the usual way," she said indifferently. "I know so little about these things. I have been thinking and thinking all day, but I see no way to follow, excepting the old round of rehearsal and dressing and dancing. The hateful old round. And then the horrid agents. Think of it!" she cried, catching his hand. "They have put some one in my place as first lady of the

ballet. I fear I cannot regain—that is what I must go out for soon. I must see old Gaspard and persuade him to take me—must go on my knees, I suppose—promise anything, half my salary, perhaps, to get back my place.” She still held Robert’s hand, apparently unconscious of all but her misfortune.

“What can I do, madame?”

“If you will help me first with Gaspard. He adores you—he will do anything for you. Ah, do—do!” With brimming eyes she implored him, carrying his hand to her lips in a childish gesture of pleading.

“In what way?”

“Tell him you wish it.”

He had withdrawn his hand and frowned at thought of making Saline appear his protégée. Saline sighed softly. “I should not be indebted to you long.”

“Can I not assist you with M. Vignaud?”

“No! I will not return to him—a man whose heart is so black. He seemed so kind—now you are hard without, but kind in your heart. Do help me—I implore you.” In a flash she was beside him on the floor, all her beauty breathing up at him, her tearful face pleading, her slender hands caressing.

“This is not necessary,” exclaimed Robert, coldly. “If I help you it will not be because you fall at my feet. You

may be beautiful—as you know—but your beauty is loathsome when you misuse it so.”

She only smiled up at him and nestled farther down among her silken folds.

“Yes; it is all quite true, in books. But I like to be on my knees to you. Your face is so much finer from this point of view. And I like your freezing temper because then I need not fear—anything. You are a sort of god up there, with your stern brows and your splendid eyes and your nervous mouth—and I like to feel it.”

“Circe!” muttered Robert, “to make beasts of men! I warn you,” he said aloud, “that if you lose one jot more of my respect I will not help you on any consideration.”

“Respect!” she laughed, making a face at him and settling back against the divan. “How easily you are deprived of it! A childish whim—which is partly a woman’s right—and, presto! off you go at a tangent, throwing respect in the waste basket! Do you think I cannot hold your respect—if—I—want—it? Now, don’t spoil the only happy hour I have known for weeks—the only one I may know for years.”

“You color your picture too highly. I am nothing to you.”

“That is just it,” she said, quietly. “You are nothing

to me, so I treat you as I like. I need not make you love me or hate me. I can be my true self. And, m'sieur, my true self is very much of a child. Will you forgive me?" She had risen and stood nobly before him.

"I have nothing to forgive," he answered more gently. "But time presses. I wish to understand what I can do for you."

"Ah! then you *will* help me!" She drew a long sigh of relief. "But I feel faint. I have been so anxious—I have not eaten. Will you bear with me a little longer?" She called Louise and asked for crackers and wine. When the tray came she filled two glasses. "You will not refuse what hospitality I have to offer! I shall feel that you scorn me, indeed." She took the glass. "Nearly ten o'clock! I must see Gaspard to-night. If I fail the outlook is so dreadful. Poverty! He may turn me away and then it is all over. You cannot dream how I fear that." A feverish color came to her face. "M'sieur!" she cried, harshly, "you say you will help me. It is late. You can have little to do now. Come with me now. Tell Gaspard why I broke my contract. Make him take me. If you knew what it means!"

For some reason his mind did not respond quickly, but at length he put his objection into words. "I should prefer to see Gaspard alone."

"Very well; I will wait in the carriage, and I can sign the contract, if necessary. I am so grateful, dear friend!" She smoothed his hand against her cheek.

"There is no time to waste so uselessly." Quickly withdrawing. "It is a pity you are too ignorant to behave as other women do!"

"Ignorant!" she cried, laughing and whirling about the room, gathering a lace fichu and a silk shawl from somewhere, ringing for Louise, ordering a carriage, and handing Robert a second glass of wine, all between smiles and laughter. Robert tasted the glass mechanically, but set it down with a keen glance at her.

"Your wine is strong, madame. I never knew so small a glass to hold so much fire. Is it drugged?"

"Monsieur! You must be dreaming."

"Not I."

"See how base your suspicions are." Filling a glass, she held it to the light before drinking.

"Here is to success with Gaspard," she sang gayly, and Robert half unconsciously drank the toast.

"Another glass, madame," he said, smiling, "and I should leave you for an apothecary. But I am strong. Your pretty, innocent wine has found its match, I hope."

Saline seemed more astonishingly handsome than ever

when she had half concealed herself in silk and fichu, descending the stairs on his arm, quite fearful of falling.

"Where does this Gaspard live?"

"Out on the road to the forest by the St. Cloud entrance."

"But will he be awake?"

"Very much awake. This is his busy time, from now until one o'clock or after, at least in summer. It is a beautiful drive, and it will be mysterious the last part of the way on the wooded road. There is no moon to-night. Isn't it fun? Do unbend a little. I am not a gorgon or a fearful death," she exclaimed, petulantly.

"You might be both to the wrong man."

He was both vexed and uneasy. The fiery fluid she had given him ran riot. He felt himself on the verge of oblivion to all but the extraordinary magnetism of this woman, and he had yet before him a two or three hour tête-à-tête. His repugnance to her was deep rooted; but it was gradually becoming vague, losing its force in her apparent sincerity and questioning even its right of existence in her vivid atmosphere. She was long silent as they drove to the city gate and out upon the road beyond, and her very silence worked for her, in his imagination, until he was not sorry to be where he was.

Out of the dusky darkness the humming of the insect

world droned its sleepy song. The shadowy columns of great trees loomed at the windows, to be passed in the warm, forest-scented air like sentinels asleep at their post. The flowers, rising and falling on the woman's bosom, filled the carriage with heavy sweetness, and her soft breathing, though he could not hear it, tantalized him with mystery.

"It is strange that you will always misunderstand me," she murmured, regretfully. "For all your chivalry you impute to me only what all other men do—nothing better—you doubt my sincerity, you think me ignorant, designing, incapable of a generous affection. Perhaps all that was true only so long ago as before I knew you. But it is not true now—not all—and I am sorry it is not. It is so hard to be good when you have never been good. I wish I had never seen you. I could be gay then without the nagging thought, 'He would not have me so.' *Why* did you come to disturb me?" Saline put a clinging hand on his shoulder and raised her face close to his. "Why could you not stay in your monastery and leave me free?"

"Leave you free!"

"Yes, I said, leave me free. Leave me to my unfettered life instead of tying me to you."

"*Tying* you to me!"

"Tying, binding, chaining me, with your splendid face,

which will not quit my dreams ; with your ambitions and powers, your great future—all that you are ! *Why* didn't you leave me in peace ?”

“This is madness.”

“You are right—the madness that ends in the Seine or hangs in the forest or dies in a closet.”

“My dear Madame Vignaud——”

“*Non !* You shall not call me that hateful name.”

“My dear child, then. This is the fancy of an hour, born of the beauty of the night, child of a thousand influences, of no more strength than cobwebs. Put it from you.”

“I cannot. It is my only happiness. Listen,” she continued, with every word a caress. “I would be true to you ; I would bring you the love of self-sacrifice, and that is hard for me to give. You have awakened me to a new life, a new understanding of myself, to a new need. I want to be honest—I need your help—I need your support and your loyalty. Only love me a little, a very little, and I will be good. I will show you how great a woman can be who has known all things without love, and when loves comes can lay at your feet all she knows. I want to make you great, the greatest in your profession. I can!—I was not meant for small ways of life, for small struggles. And I was not meant for all the wretched

past which you despise. I came to it in the horror of being lost in mean littleness. I could not face that—the endless struggle with penury, mean conditions. It was that horror which haunted me out of an honest life into the other. Your heart is great enough to understand, to forgive. You are just enough not to destroy a woman for what you condone in a man. Help me, beloved; help me.” Her head drooped on his shoulder and her arms about his neck begged for an answer.

He bent slowly forward and kissed her forehead.

“I have prayed night and day for this, for your forgiveness,” she murmured, and her voice was like a prayer. “To have a very little of your love would be the sign of God’s forgiveness. I have suffered for it, God knows; and I think, perhaps, He puts that in the account and balances my life so that there is just this small hope for me; just the small chance that you may not cast me away. It has been such utter failure all my life; such a dismal round of unreal things, painted shams; such sickness to death; such misery in trying to uphold what was left of my woman’s dignity.”

“Poor child!”

“Pity me. I am better for it.

She was silent a little, half crying in the darkness.

When she spoke again her voice was stronger and vibrated with some new emotion.

“See how beautiful the night is—how full the air seems with love. Did you see the shadow of the ivy on that tree? That is the way I would love—if you would let me—I would keep the storms from you, and you need only spread your shade between me and the world and love me—if you would—a very little. Did you hear the stroke of the bell of the chapel of St. Cloud on the hill? It must be twelve—night dying in the arms of morning. Oh, Robert—love me!” She slipped softly to the floor, nestling her head on his knee. He caught her up instantly and she buried her face in his neck.

The bells of St. Cloud were ringing.

“A kiss for each stroke of the dying night,” she whispered. With the second touch of her warm lips a memory stirred in the depths of his past.

He saw a bed, shifting shadows, candle light on a dead face and white-shrouded figure.

He felt the breath of suffocating heat, and knew two figures standing in the shadows.

So intense was the vision that he scarcely felt Saline in his arms until she gave him the last passionate kiss which awoke and stormed all his senses.

"The bells! The bells!" he cried, hoarsely.

All was over in a moment.

It was nothing for his young strength to struggle free from her, to break open the door and fling himself out upon the road.

For a moment he floundered in the dust. Then he was up and away, running the forest like a mad thing.

The carriage rolled on with its door grinding against the wheel, whether to Old Gaspard's he never knew.

In time the spirit of the dewy, whispering forest allayed the torment of fever which had carried him forward like sand in hot wind.

He fell at last on the moss under a tangle of shrubs, with a burst of thanksgiving.

"God bless the bells of St. Cloud!"

To the deep-mouthed peals of distant thunder far away coastward he breathed the first prayer that had ever winged its way to his mother, and, for the first time in his life, implored forgiveness of her memory timidly and reverently.

When again he was himself, standing strong and proud with the kings of the forest, he said aloud:

"My mother spoke with me this night. God make me worthy of her."

CHAPTER VIII.

Cynic: "Heed the ways of the living and forget the dead."

"You have seen my father?" asked Rose of the young clergyman from Peoria, in the afternoon following the musicale at M. Vignaud's hotel.

"It was almost as much for that reason as for the pleasure of seeing you that I looked you up at the Legation. I thought you would like to know that you need not——"

"Concern myself about him?"

"Not quite that."

"Then he is happy?"

"And astonishingly successful."

"You mean in love as well as in politics."

Young Danforth looked uncomfortable.

"Is she very beautiful?"

"Rather earthy."

"Then where is the success?"

"Politics sink a great deal of money."

"And she has it." After a pause: "Has she anything else?"

"A loud voice, a handsome figure, plenty of good nature—while she has what she wants."

"Are you quite charitable?"

"Quite. More than I should be if it were my fortune to live in the same house with her."

"And where are you living?"

"On the road, as you see. I had a call to a pulpit in a country town for a year after leaving college. Then I resigned for a year of travel. Now, Rosette, don't you quizz me."

She laughed. "Has there been no one to do it for me all this time?"

"Nope."

"And you haven't pined away?" with mock melancholy.

"Not on your life. Been trying to keep myself in jolly good condition for your dear sake."

"Stop it, Jack. You should have left your slang in college."

"So I did for a year. Lost twenty pounds."

"Do your weight and your slang stand or fall together?"

"It looks like it. Honest, Rose; it's the most awful business, this providing a congregation with a minister to fit their crotchets."

"Yes?"

"Awful! They seem to think you're not a man, but a sort of warning to men—a guide post with signs—so many miles to perdition; so many miles to be saved, if you turn to the right, etc."

"You scandalized them?"

"Couldn't help it," ruefully.

"Smoking too much for them?"

"Nope. I left that in college with my slang—a jolly big mistake. Hadn't a notion that golf was a sin and football next door to murder, and a moonlight sail the jaws of the devil!"

"Jack; I believe you flirted."

"Nary a flirt in town. All thin little spinsters who didn't dare smile at me."

"You see you are handsome," bending her merry face over her yarns.

"I was once, but those spinsters pickled me." Here Rose lost her gravity.

"But, Jack, you know you believe in your calling," she remonstrated.

"Y-es. If I can ever find a congregation that will look at it as I do."

"Don't you remember the nobility of man we used to talk about?"

"Nobility fiddlesticks." Jack got up to look at the sea as the rain fell on it.

"No—but really," Rose insisted.

"Really; I believe nobility is born in a fellow and very few get a chance at the plum."

"Paris is hurting you," Rose said seriously.

"It might in time," he admitted, flushing. "It's a bad place for a man's morals if they're not bred in the bone." Rose laid down her work to examine him again. As she resumed it she said, with eyes down:

"I think you have made a mistake."

"How?"

"You should choose some way of life that does not set you apart from the world."

"Now, Rosey," he remonstrated, "don't take a man too seriously when he's had a bad breakfast. My calling is the only thing in life I can see worth doing. It is the only one I would sacrifice a night's sleep for. You mustn't think I have done myself up yet. You see, I tried the Little Minister to a New England Thrums and—well—I didn't succeed. There wasn't any Babby."

"I see."

"Now, if you had been there——"

"Jack! You sinner."

"Rose; do you know you are different?"

"I hope not too different."

"But you are more complicated—more stunning."

"'Um!'"

"Something has been happening to you."

Under his examination she looked up serenely. As he watched her his manner changed. "I thought I was talking to the merry girl who left home going on two years ago. But I find a thoughtful woman—and—you have not been unhappy?" he asked, both diffidently and gently. She returned his look bravely, but her eyes soon deepened into sadness. It was he who had been her mother's favorite and at her wish it was he who had pronounced her mother's funeral service.

"Dear little friend, I have been rough and thoughtless. I came from your home and I bring you no comfort—only husks. The spot over in the silent resting-place is fair and green. Flowers have kept watch with every Lord's day and many go there. Many whom your mother loved and helped."

"Who takes the flowers?" she asked, not trying to hide the tears that were coming. He did not answer. "Is it you? Dear old Jack, she could be sure of you."

"I could not do less. Did you know it was your mother who helped me once at college when I must have given

up my career otherwise? She helps me often now. The dead are strangely sympathetic."

"You do not mean——"

"No. I do not mean in the séance room. I mean that the impress of such an influence as your mother's is stronger upon me now than when she was among the living."

"Others do not think so," she said, turning away, and he could make no reply that would not cast a slur upon Thomas Lloyd. "Ah, well," drying her eyes, "we are among the living. The day is ours, the sunlight, and the glorious night. I have no right to weep them away."

"You have something better to do, and I am proud of you for it. We are talking of a great concert when you come home to us."

"Don't, Jack; don't," she exclaimed with a quiver of pain in her voice.

"You do not mean——"

"Yes. I shall never see the dear place again."

"Now, what in thunder have they been doing to you?"

"Nothing—just fortune. I won't go. You know how obstinate I am."

"Yes. I saw you ride a tikeish critter once." The memory brought a smile to his face. "But, Rosette, our little May Queen, you don't mean to be obstinate with *me*,

do you? You'll give me a drop of coffee to keep me in order, eh? You've taken it out of me, straight enough."

She ordered coffee in the summer-house, which was sheltered just enough from the warm, summer rain and their tête-à-tête continued for another hour longer before Jack Danforth went back to town, begging to come again.

That night Rose dreamed of home. She was awakened by the rumble of a carriage over the hard sand further up on the beach. All night the carriage rolled and rumbled over the downs, and the morning found her tired and spiritless. The rain has ceased, leaving the beach honey-combed with pools, in which the scurrying clouds of the clearing storm were reflected in soft miniature, and the sea, away to the offing, rolled long and slow, hardly rising to a whitecap.

It all seemed unnatural. The house looked ghastly. There was no talking wind along the sands. Gulls beat about over the sea for bits of floatage, breaking the stillness with harsh cries. Everywhere gray and white tired the eye with subdued glare.

Rose ventured out, hoping to find a breeze somewhere. As she walked over the oozing sand a man approached, head down, and she recognized Robert Dinsmore with a sort of fright. His face was pale when he came up.

"May I see you, Miss Lloyd?"

"Here I am," she answered, smiling.

"But do you wish to see me?"

"Yes—always—I am afraid."

"Afraid?"

She nodded and threw off her cape, saying into its folds:

"It is warm, don't you think?"

"I suppose it is. Let me take that. You have had a heavy rain here. I heard distant thunder last night, but there was no rain in Paris, for I was driving late."

"In a carriage?"

"Yes. Why—may I ask."

"Because—but never mind. Are you in trouble? Would it not be pleasanter in the house?"

"Not unless it is your preference. The air does me good."

He took off his traveling cap, ramming it into his pocket, and walked moodily on by her side.

"Why did you ask me about the carriage?"

"Because I heard one rolling through the night."

"Anything else?"

"N—no. But the impression was most painful."

"In what way? Please do not mind my inquisitiveness."

"I do not mind. But it is hard to tell you. It felt

like danger and woke me twice with such terror that I had to sit up, light my candles and read. I did not fall asleep until late in the morning."

"Curious! It *was* danger, and I have come to tell you."

She stood still. "Were you hurt?"

"No. I think I am better for it—not such a consummate fool as I have been."

"That does not help me to understand you."

"No—but you see I am getting myself up to the point where I can hold on. I want to say first that I tell you because I am anxious you should understand me thoroughly, and am even more anxious that there should be no halo of perfection about me to you. I do not want to be overrated by the woman I love—if I can help it."

He did not look to see the color mounting beautifully over her face nor to see how lustrous her serious eyes had become.

"Now then!" he said, as though standing up to a physical contest. He whirled round and faced her with his story, treating himself without favor to the end.

Breathing deeply, she said: "That was right. But it must have been frightful to do at the last—to overcome so much." For a moment she mused to herself before saying: "Then M. Vignaud sent her away night before last. I thought he might." With delicious candor she

continued: "You see, I know all about it. I know that woman to be even worse than you think. She was never M. Vignaud's wife. Under the same pretense she had me play to a company of nondescripts—frightful beings who have haunted me ever since—they seemed so polluted, indescribably worse than she." Robert's wrath was ready to break when she added: "I understand what she was trying to accomplish with you; but what was she doing with me?"

"God knows—perhaps. Dieu merci, you are out of it. But I must not forget. I have more to tell you, and it is the worst."

"You have done something?" doubtfully.

"No. I told you of the bells of St. Cloud?"

"Yes, and of the mother, the child, the heat. I seem to see and feel it."

"It is not so very much to tell, after all—only it has controlled my imagination for so long. The woman was my mother."

Rose clasped her hands.

"You were the child! And the priest?"

"Was Father Benedict." The story seemed simple now that it had been told. But Robert's eyes fell as he continued, with fear of what he might see in her face when

next he should look. "All that is not so much. The trouble is—the trouble is——"

"You do not know who you are."

"Yes—how did you know?"

"I cannot tell. It is like the carriage."

"It has tortured me all my life. But it was never quite so bad as it is now before the woman I love."

Rose turned a face of loveliest shy sympathy.

"Do you not despise me?"

"You will never know how little cause I could have for that," she replied, speaking with difficulty.

"Could you marry a man such as I am?"

"I couldn't say I wouldn't," she admitted, backing away from him.

"But would you?"

"I wouldn't if I couldn't."

"Rose!"

"Sir?"

"*Will* you marry me?"

She tossed back her head and stooped to gather up her skirt in one hand.

"Catch me!" she cried, and was off like an arrow down the sands toward the distant house.

For an instant he stood abashed, perplexed. But her flying figure and the laugh she tossed back at him gave

him his feet. For still another moment he watched her, with the first chills of happiness taking possession of him. Then he was after her with a huzzah.

They flew over the wet sands, Robert gaining moment by moment, until Rose tore through a short cut and bounded into the house just as Robert reached it, just as her landlady was coming out, and just as Rose's two discreet pupils were approaching from the other side. With a little gasp Rose pushed back her pretty hair to say breathlessly:

"Let me present my future husband, mesdames."

* * * * *

And Saline? She returned to Paris.

CHAPTER IX.

Threads in the woof of Destiny
Mingle their dark and shine;
Love in its glory of sacrifice,
Fear and its terrors fine.

Birth, Death and the Hero—
Which in the woof is strong?
Which thread will break in the weaving,
And silence the weaver's song?

In announcing his engagement Robert wrote to Benedict from Porte Sauveur de Pêche, the hamlet by the sea.

"The only cloud in my sky is your absence, dear friend. She has come as I prophesied, and in the sunlight of her coming my unreasonable fears of a catastrophe have fled like shadows of night. No catastrophe can befall us now unless some unseen fate looms up out of a past of which we are unconscious.

"You are to be absent many months. But return to us as soon as possible. You will find us in our own home here by the sea, for I am thinking of buying the quaint place, and it will be ready for us in spring."

In November Robert wrote:

"Paris.

"Pray for me, Pater. I fear my soul will lose itself in too deep happiness. We have been married by a dear

friend of Rose—a young divine from her own city—and we leave for the Riviera in a half hour. Rose explicitly wished to be married in the fashion of her own people, without announcement and without any of our usual ceremonies. The marriage form is so purely for herself and for the world that I would have accepted any ceremony she might have chosen. Bid us godspeed.”

In January Robert wrote in reply to a question :

“Villa des Pines.

“My Dear Pater: The extracts you quote from newspapers are much exaggerated, and I warn you not to believe more than half. To acclaim any man as ‘Paganini reincarnated’ is to be a fool. It is true that I have many more engagements offered me than I accept, and that I am rapidly becoming what is called a rich man. Our expenses are relatively light, and it is an easy matter to bank in Rose’s name a growing sum, which will insure her comfort should I break an arm or be knocked out altogether.

“If you could see her, Pater! I admit that at times she frightens me with the shade of melancholy which obscures her face; but, in the next moment, her laughter and serenity return, shining through her sweet face in a way that not even you know yet. I think a memory rises in such moments of the shock she received when you and I first knew her, which produced the prostration of those winter months, a shock of which I know no more now than I knew then.

“We shall return to Paris late in May, to go down to Porte Sauveur to take possession of the old house, which is being remodeled. You will have returned and must lose no time in coming to us. I am making no contracts for that time, although the English season looks alluring. I want to live with my happiness.

“Adieu, my Pater.”

With the coming of May, Benedict returned to the monastery; the Dinsmores came from the Riviera and went to Porte Sauveur, and Babette went with them.

The cool freshness of spring still lent zest to the first warm days of early June.

The house by the sea, now white and comely, spread inviting piazzas over the greensward reclaimed from the golden sands. The summer-house wore a Japanese gala look in its flowering baskets swinging in its many alcoves. On a broad, low table within it, laid with white and silver, coffee and tea-urns were standing, hot with the spirit fires beneath them.

“Rolls, Babette, rolls!” sang a musical voice within the house, “and be careful of your eggs. Oh, what a morning!” cried Rose, coming to the open door with arms stretched across it and her head thrown back to the soft sea-wind. “No rush—no trams—no crowds—no duties but just our own—no concert to-night! And the sea,

Robert! Look at the changing, lovely thing. And the swish of it along the beach—the touch of a goddess' garment. I should call the sea feminine. Just look how sinuous she is and alluring, and there are the white sails she woos. How fine they are in the offing! Do you know we are very late? Half after nine!" Robert laid either hand upon hers, looking out over her shoulder.

"Does it matter, dear?"

"Only that Father Benedict comes at noon."

"So much the better. We shall be the fresher to receive him."

"There goes Babette with the rolls. Must I bid you to breakfast?"

"Not if you precede me." She slipped from his hands and beckoned him out. When he had placed her to his satisfaction, where she had full view of the sea with the swinging baskets behind her and the burnished urns red glowing at her hand, he drew a chair where he could watch her best, deftly preparing their coffee and other preliminaries. When these had been comfortably finished, he broke the silence reminiscently.

"A year ago we were like the unfitted parts of a delicate machine, incomplete and valueless. Now we should be worth something. Did you know that you have taught

me to find myself in loving you? For very pride, if for nothing else, I must give the world something in return. But there is one regret—I fear you have smothered your talent in marrying me.”

“But I have other, weightier concerns.”

“Weightier? Ask yourself a little deeper. Do you not regret it?”

Her eyes opened wide.

“Not a bit.”

“Are you sure?”

“Quite. You see, I would rather love you.”

“You take me at an unfair advantage. I feel the eyes of the sea and the gulls. You positively must not say such things unless we are alone.”

“Must?”

“Yes.”

“How serious you are. I would like to play exceedingly well, but you do it for me. Often when you are at work an ideal of what you are playing grows in my mind, and then in an hour, a week or a month you reproduce that ideal, living, palpitating, with something of yourself running through it like shafts of light. Ah, that is playing! Do you think I would give that up for anything I could do with a violin?”

"That explains it," mused Robert. "Now I understand the curious phase of mind that I have had often during the last year. You sorceress, fancier of dreams, lover of ideals! So it is your heart throbbing through my fingers? It is a heavenly road to your heart, dear. Now I understand why I have never been able to surprise in you the least tinge of regret for the merging of your hopes into my life. It is much to ask of a woman."

She shook her head.

"Yes—no less than half a life," he insisted. "It cannot but be a sacrifice, though nobility hides it even from your own consciousness. And yet, *ma mie*—you have but bartered after all; it is a barter well worth man's estate." Rose raised her pretty, proud head a little straighter on its rounding throat and looked inquiringly at him.

He spread his hand out, palm up, and leaned over it, speaking with a lilt in his low voice like the love-note of a thrush:

"You bartered with the giver of life. You exchanged, sold, threw away world success for a priceless coin, the coin of God, a soul—to be yours to love, yours to mold, yours in the first and the last hour. Your compact is with God, beloved, not with man or the world."

All pride fell away from her. She laid her head on his

open palm. There was a benediction in the air to Robert, and when the swift moment passed back into their natures, a golden memory, they looked, each into the other's eyes, better loved. After that there was silence which they had no need to break. A harsh sound, foreign to the fall and splash of the waves and the ripple of sand back with the ebb, broke their silent communion. As Robert rose he exclaimed:

"Bless the saints, it is Pater! And it is not noon yet. You must have started at midnight. Mon Dieu! you did! Here, Babette, Basquenet! Take the father's bundles from him. See his chamber is ready. Ah, Pater, this is good," cried Robert, receiving Benedict from the old trap which had brought him lumbering from the village. Rose stood ready beside him.

"How fair thou art," said Benedict, a trifle huskily, taking her face in his hands. As he stood looking at them with overflowing brightness he exclaimed: "Do you know, children, I sometimes think that Providence brings about such a paradise as this once in a while, to satisfy itself that a paradise is still possible to human beings. No, thank you. No need to waste time in the house. Stopped at the queer Maison d'Or, in the village. But I *am* ready for my coffee. And this is the way you live? What Precieux you are!" Talking, they seated themselves in

the summer-house. "Books!" cried Benedict, "in a sea-shell like this. Tolstoi, Maeterlinck—there is a mine of nuggets." By this time he was growing breathless, and his coffee, steaming at his right hand, he tasted it carefully and a dozen times set it down to look in their faces with infinite satisfaction.

"Mes enfants!" he said again and again, with an indescribable accent which brought a mist to their eyes.

"Tell us of your travels, Pater." Immediately Benedict's face fell.

"Ah, it has been a sorry business. But it will bear telling here amid your joy." A sudden expressive lift of his eyebrows caused Rose to send Babette away. He leaned across the table nearer to them.

"You have been watching the drift of affairs; you have seen pieces of wreckage on the political current; you have seen uneasiness in the people, fear at the Bourse; you have heard the priests denounce justice from the sacred place by order of their superiors; you may have suspected that that presaged a great fear for the stability of our institutions; you have seen cabinets dissolve and ministers fall out to drown in the current—all this, and no one knows what it portends or what is its cause. I have been sent through the land to discover what I could. (I would they had sent another. My heart is sick with

what I know.) Everywhere—France has been betrayed. And when the people know—God help us. The people—the poor, common people, have slaved for the Republic, have paid their endless taxes for the support of their idol, the army, and for the Government incidentally. They pay their tax; they leave the rest to their betters. The deluded creatures do not know that the safety of the state is not founded on their money, but upon the share they take in public affairs. But they have no understanding of public affairs. They are babes—haven't I seen it? They hear things are not as they should be, but they cannot right them. They stand stupidly by; leave it in the hand of the bureaucracy until the time for the barricades comes. The barricades—ah—those they understand. They can give up their lives in a blind revolution—kill, murder, wade through to another régime—count their dead—go back to their ploughs, their furnaces—look up to the new régime as if it were a god—stand by and wait until the unchecked powers wielding the new machinery become again foul, and again their idol must be burned in the furnace—execrated of the people.”

“Has this to do with Dreyfus?”

“As an excuse—only an excuse—a wicked one. But what would you? The death of one man, or a revolution?”

"But the revolution may come in spite of the sacrifice," suggested Robert. "Because of it and the wrong it implies."

"I fear it." Suddenly Benedict looked at Rose, growing white. "But—it may not be so bad. No—not so bad; there will be no revolution at all. Such follies belong to the past, of course—to the far-away past. Another cup? A thousand thanks. And all this talk of mine has so little to do with ourselves—and yet—whom do you suppose I discovered as one of the anti-Dreyfusite tools—the ballet dancer."

They looked at one another.

"I have watched her course. She will drag down whatever she touches. And still she is ascendant, growing richer—but the end comes—in time."

Babette came timidly from the house, stopping at a few paces to say: "Monsieur, there is a man from Paris waiting to see you. He came on the same train with Father Benedict, but walked over."

"A gentleman?"

Babette shrugged her shoulders and spread her hands deprecatingly.

"Give him some coffee and ask him to wait a few moments."

"He must be in haste," suggested Rose, "coming by that train."

"Never mind, ma mie. It will do him good to rest. Have you more to tell us, Pater?" But Benedict had been studying the varying color in Rose's face. "No—it is all rather hazy and improbable—very much like vaporings over a European war which fan the air from time to time—nothing in it. But what I should like to know is the meaning of the very peculiar name of this village. *Porte le Sauveur de Pêche*—there must be a legend of some sort belonging to it." The question was put to Rose, but noticing a fatigued look in her face, Robert took up the reply.

"Yes, a peculiar one. You see the sand bar making out north beyond the lesser bay—a white-capped little peninsula. On this side of the farthest breakers a deep gully has been worked in the bar. The current makes into it with a swirl and a rush. It carries to the bottom whatever it brings or finds on the surface, beats it about and casts it up on the bar with the outgoing drag of waters, which is very strong. It is said that a century ago, when chateaux were more plentiful than now, a lord lived on a grand estate a few miles inland. There is the usual tale of a fair village girl and of uncongeniality in his household, which was centered at the Court of Louis XVI. But

the girl was not usual. When she found that her child would be illegitimate, although at that time the stigma upon the child would have been milder than now, she walked out upon the bar and let herself into the swirl of the waters in the death hole. Here the legend becomes incoherent. It is said that her village lover passed with his catch of fish as the outgoing waters cast her up on the sand; that he vowed a sacrifice to Our Mother of Compassion if She would save the maid. That at the end of his prayer he found her breathing and that he married her. Her children's children to-day rule in this part of the country. And so the spot is called le Sauveur de Pêche. The chateau went down before the revolution and its master fell before the Sans Culottes, and his name is now extinct in the land of France. That is the legend; half gruesome, half satisfying with its crude justice. But *I* should not care to try a prayer against the swirl of those waters. Now I must go to the man from Paris. Shall I bring you a shawl, ma mie?"

Benedict's eyes softened as he watched them. Their happiness was so full and simple, so free from either affectation or parade. He could imagine a rare communion of thought between them, but he saw that they were not likely to show him what that communion might be.

"How well he looks," commented Benedict, watching

Robert's quick, elastic movements, his fine proportions showing a clean-cut silhouette against the white wall of the house as he entered it.

"He is the handsomest man on the Riviera," smiled Rose in reply, "not only to my eye, but to men, women and journalists—and they are sometimes jealous, you know. You can have no conception of the furore he created and of the sums of money offered. He has taken a Titan's leap since we listened to his début—really."

"You see what happiness may do for a genius coming at the right moment. You must feel his success as your own." With blushes and glistening eyes Rose answered:

"Yes—it came after our betrothal. I watched his mastery growing grandly, but now—nothing can hinder him. He will take his way to the zenith whatever happens—even to me." For a moment he saw the shadow of melancholy of which Robert had written. It spread over her face like the shadow of a spring cloud and left a tear where it had passed. Benedict felt a sudden, nameless fear tighten his heartstrings, but when he looked up she was smiling upon him serenely and had reset his plate with honey and rolls. The incident puzzled Benedict and lingered in his memory, giving no excuse for itself and being wholly unwarranted by the glowing health nature seemed to have lavished upon her. Upon

Robert's return, Rose excused herself, promising to be ready for a stroll with them later in the day, and the men walked along the shore toward the peninsula.

"This is a serious business upon which you are engaged, Pater."

"Nothing more serious has risen since the coup d'etat."

"Not even Boulanger?"

"Not even Boulanger. The danger is not in the ambition of one man, with a following of malcontents. It is a disease of the state which has eaten to the heart of its departments until there is left a honeycomb of rotten tissues. And that I should live to see it! I believed so in the integrity of the nation! I loved her institutions and her proud place!"

"The crisis may pass."

"To what good end? Let the state further despoil the nation? Let the army go to rack? Bring our name to deeper disgrace among nations with scandal of legislature, scandal of court, scandal of the army? No! Bring on the revolution! Let Jacques Bonhomme once more play surgeon and cut out the heart of the evil. A monarchy once more. Then the Republic will rise again purified with a constitution, let us hope, which will make these shameful evils impossible."

"Do you mean——"

"I mean that I welcome the revolution—I shall work for it."

"You, of all men—priest—philanthropist—lover of men!"

"It is because I love them. Do you grudge an arm on the clinique table if it mean life?"

"But a revolution. My God!" said Robert, slowly, breathlessly.

The priest did not hear. With knitted brows he looked over the restless sea, and then, as though in answer to some insistent doubt, he exclaimed uneasily:

"It cannot be so bad as it was in other days. They know more. My children know more. The Republic has done much for them. In God's hand—it is in His hand. He may dispel the storm at its very bursting. He may show the people a better way." For a moment he dropped his head in dejection. Then, clearing his face of its anxiety, Benedict turned to Robert unexpectedly:

"And your news from Paris. A man does not take the midnight train on slight provocation. It must be a friend or——"

"An enemy," finished Robert. "It is the latter, a nasty business, and I cannot see whose hand it is." After a momentary silence, Benedict impatiently exclaimed:

"Well?"

"It must be kept from Rose at all hazard. She already has something on her mind, probably the blow she received in that letter—whatever it was. Our physician has advised me to persuade her to free herself by telling me. But—well—it takes more courage than I have to ask for a confidence she does not offer—looks like distrust or suspicion, when there is no taint of that sort in me."

"Yes—but you fill me with impatience. The man from Paris—what is he—what does he want?"

"Money for a safe kind of blackmail."

"Faugh!"

"But there is just enough equity in it to fill a sensitive mind with terror."

He fell silent, and Benedict watched his uneasiness with an anxiety he could not hide.

"I wrote you that we were married after the ways of her church. There was no civil marriage."

"Man!" muttered Benedict with a gesture of sharp impatience.

"Our child will not be legitimate under the law of France." Benedict started, then quickly laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"What did he want?"

"Money."

"Did you give it?"

"No."

"You sent him about his business?"

"Yes."

"Roughly?"

"Of course."

"What will he do?"

"What can he do beyond menace?"

"What can he not do! A nicely worked-up scandal may advertise Robert Dinsmore, the greatest violinist of his generation, but do you think it will do nothing else?" Robert looked at Benedict's denunciating face with fear in his own.

"He cannot!"

"It may already be in press. You know the press of this civilized world. Scandal is money—good fortune—its staff of life. But what was your plan?"

"My plan is to leave France as soon as possible and go to America. There Rose will be safe."

"You say as soon as possible. To-morrow?"

"In a week. It will be hard to get Rose away, even in that time. She will not wish to leave. There are a thousand details and there is no reason to give. I dare not tell her this. She is so excessively fearful of even

the word illegitimate, and I have already received one warning."

"Have you had any offers from America yet?"

"One."

"Close with it. Make that the excuse. Get away to-morrow."

"Why do you insist on to-morrow?"

"Because I have seen so much in this France. If your enemy is rich, there is little that cannot be done to you and to her. Without her, you could fight it out to a finish—to a coup de grace, if need be. But with her—you are defenseless. Keep the papers from her and beware of every stranger. I would you had stopped his mouth with gold."

"But the wrong of it!"

"*And—Rose——*" Benedict let the words fall heavily of their own weight, and Robert turned away from him.

Rose herself came into the midst of their disquiet with a telegram which she handed Benedict, waiting on Robert's arm while he read its contents.

"I hope it will not take you away when we have had scarcely time to realize that you are here."

"But it does. I am more sorry than you. I would give all I possess to remain with you during the coming week. The Superior sends for me. There is informa-

tion none but I can give, which he needs at this moment. I must take the outgoing train."

"And arrive at midnight? The monastery will be closed," objected Robert.

"The way to the office of the Superior is never closed."

Silently they returned. A quick dejeuner and Benedict started with Robert on the road to the village to catch the three o'clock way-train.

CHAPTER X.

When they had gone, Rose went to her room, exchanged her dress for a loose robe, and took possession of the recess of her window with a sigh of comfort. The sun glowed in the west, its light breaking to a sea of diamonds tossed on the heaving breast of the ocean; a purple cloak of clouds in the horizon folded back from the face of the shimmering sea; near at hand the sands shifted to and fro, enslaved to the capricious fingers of the playing waves. Gradually the cloak of cloud darkened the glowing sea; and slowly, with its threatening rise, a shadow crept over the lovely face watching in the house on the sands.

“When he is away from me, I long to tell him. I seem to see how much better it would be and how much he would help me to forget, as he has forgotten the terrors of his own life. But I cannot remember when he comes near—I am so happy then that it all seems unreal—I think almost that no letter ever came to me—no blight ever fell. But when he is away—then I am afraid.” She gave a quick little look about the room. “I am afraid, too, of something else. Does a man ever fully forgive such a flaw in the woman he loves—would he be quite

the same after he knew the truth? If he should know—if he should know that I am a—— No! No!” she cried aloud. “I cannot! I dare not! Better bear it alone.” Startled at the sound of her own voice, she drew back into the cushioned recess and, after a moment, continued her concentrated thought. “It would be easier to bear if it were not for the voices and for that other thing—the sense of some unseen presence. I do not see why they should trouble me or where they come from. I do not believe in them; I do not believe God lets such a thing exist. I know it is some hallucination, but how to get rid of it. Since that dreadful day of the letter, the voices have come one by one—now there are a great many. I think if the pressure here would go away, they would go too.” She laid her hand back of her head and moved uneasily. “Perhaps they will all disappear when I have that dear little face to look into. There can be no such horror upon its life as it’s father and I have had to bear—thank God!” A fervent smile lit her face. She went to the door calling down the stair, “I am up here. I was sure I heard you.”

Robert exclaimed, as he entered, “How fatigued you look. Has anything happened to worry you?”

“Nothing new,” she answered, letting him examine her face.

"Sweetheart, can you not trust me? I wish you would tell me what it is that consumes you. I leave you the picture of health. I return to find you pale and tired—dark circles about your eyes—drawn lines about this dear mouth—a lassitude to your very finger tips. Will you tell me?"

"I would rather not. It will all disappear soon. If it should not go away—soon—I will tell you—only—promise it will make no difference in your love." He started ever so little; but she felt it.

"Is it something you have done?" he asked. Her eyes and the way she drew apart from him answered for her. He grasped her hands to bow his head upon them.

"Forgive me—forgive me. It would not matter what you had done or what you could do—I love you, dear heart. You believe me?" There was a long silence. A shaft of pain seemed to have struck to her heart. His involuntary movement had spoken more eloquently to her fears than his words. If ever his ideal of her should be shattered, he would love her only because and when she compelled him, and that to her was not love. How terrible pain from his hands could be she had never known until now. There were no tears that could flow with it; it filled her breast with suffocating pain.

In great contrition Robert brought her a glass of wine

and held her in his arms as though to drive away the revulsion he knew he had produced.

Toward evening, when the threatening tempest had obscured the sun and had filled the heavens with vast, hurrying shapes, Rose fell asleep on his shoulder, but woke to forget her pain when Babette tapped on the door to announce dinner. With her sudden transition of moods, she dressed herself and went to the brilliant little salon, low ceiled, crystal lit, adance with the fire lighted for the sudden chill of the storm, with an enticing gayety which took complete possession of Robert.

"Here's to your home beyond the seas," she smiled; "here's to your home, Robert."

"My home?"

"Of course. You are no Frenchman. Oh, yes, I know—you have their gestures from force of propinquity. But you do not think like a Frenchman, and you do not love like one."

"How do you know?"

"Oh—that is my secret. I have observed them."

"Now Rose——"

"Jealous?"

"You are a little tantalizing. Who, I should like to know——"

"Number one—An old gentleman who would like to

exhibit a person like a piece of ancient glass in a cabinet. Number two—The young man who has a fit of love like a summer madness, chilled dumb by November. Number three—The middle-aged who wants to settle down and keep one for his sole comfort. Number four—The flurried, florid liaison—but that's out of the question. Where are you in the category? You don't fit, you see. You are no Frenchman."

"Then what?"

"Just a downright American. You don't know the dialect, the accent, the manner. You don't know our way of fun—but you do love like an American gentleman." Robert blushed.

"And it is so much nicer," she added, with an indescribable sigh of satisfaction.

"Parbleu! How do you know?"

"Well—you see, in America, one learns to know something about men, because they have a way of falling in love with you, and you have to let them try to win, and then if they don't, you say no, and after awhile you know something about them."

"I see. That is a shocking vista to my eyes."

"But wasn't that just what you did? Did you woo like a Frenchman?"

"Perhaps not——"

"Your race was stronger in you than the influence of environment. What a fool a Frenchman would have thought himself in your place. You received no dot, or rather none went with me; you just knew my small self and that was all."

"All I cared about, naturally."

"Don't you see how American that is? But I suppose you cannot see that yet. Then our mutual enjoyments, and our philosophical discussions, and your way of loving your companion, instead of possessing your wife—to which I should seriously object—all of that is distinctly American. When we go over you will see what I mean."

"I should like to go soon."

"Soon?"

"Yes. I am seriously thinking of cabling my acceptance of that offer you remember. Then we would have to go in a week."

"Oh—but I couldn't."

"Why not?"

"So much to do—to close up—store our belongings—pack what we want for home. Oh, I couldn't in a week."

"But I will do most of it. Men can come out from the city, etc."

"I want to take a few clothes home."

"Let somebody take your measure and send them after us."

"Awfully extravagant."

"I am afraid we must do it, dear. Do you mind very much?"

"I do not know. It is so sudden." After a pause with a suspicion of tears in her eyes, "And all our lovely, quiet summer gone; people again—the voyage—excitement—engagements—no time to ourselves. Oh, dear."

"I am as sorry as you."

"I am afraid the craze for success has you in its grip, and then it is good-by to me."

He took his coffee to a place beside her.

"This is what I propose. We will go over in a week—that is settled. Once over, I will engage for the coming season, but will do nothing now. Then you shall select some corner in your beautiful country, and we will have a quiet summer to ourselves. How will that do?"

"Beautiful. But I do not see why you cannot cable that agreement and remain here until fall."

"It is better for me to see the men and have everything settled."

"Robert, you are fibbing. There is something else."

"Yes," he replied in a low voice. "There is love of

you. I want to see you away from here safely." She patted his hand with a swift, dreamy smile.

"Then we will go. Order it as you like, dear."

Winds were beating at the shutters; the rattle of whirling sand came from the fretted glass. Doors banged as Basquenet ran to the summer-house to save the flowers swinging wildly in its alcoves.

"There!" exclaimed Rose. "Do you hear the carriage? Isn't it a shivery sound?"

"Gruesome, I confess."

"That is the way it rumbled all night when you were on trial. It really frightened me."

"I do not wonder. It sounds so like it that——"

"Don't go out, dear. There is nothing there. A high wind blew then as now."

"I rather like it. It was the next day that you challenged me on the sands to a race among the pools—and I had no overshoes, only the thin evening wear I used the night before. The fact is, I spent most of the night in the forest, trying to find my way out. On returning to the city I just had time for a bath before catching the train. What a nightmare it was—and what an awakening!"

"There it goes, off over the downs toward the peninsula. It sounds like a coach of the eighteenth century.

Imagine the ladies, the outriders and all, out floundering in such a night. Now that we have had the awakening, I hope we will not come to the nightmare again." So saying, Rose led the way to the curtained alcove window, where they could watch the storm riding through the night.

In the morning Robert went to the village to offer the house in rental to its former owner, and to Paris to attend to the many details which their sudden departure had raised. He could not return until the following day, and called Babette to him before leaving.

"Your mistress is not well. Do not allow any one to disturb her. If the man who came the other day from Paris should return, tell him that I will call or send to his office before long. Do not allow him to see madame under any circumstances. Mind?"

"I hear, monsieur. He was bad, I know."

"How do you know?"

"By the way he looked out of the sides of his eyes. I didn't feel safe with the silver till I had seen the last of his back. He has been once in jail, that's certain."

"And how do you know that?"

"By the way he looks behind him."

"Then he could not bribe you, Babette?"

Babette choked and walked off.

"Never mind, child," cried Robert. "If I had seriously doubted you I would have said nothing. I have trusted you in giving this warning."

"I understand, monsieur. But you might have known——"

Robert meant to say something comforting, but Babette had rushed off in a way he remembered from the old days.

In his absence Rose prepared her lists and passed a busy day. In the afternoon she was surprised to hear an altercation at the door. Babette's voice in a passion could not be mistaken.

"If you put your foot on the sill I'll squeeze it flat. Monsieur is not at home, and you cannot see madame. I told you that ten minutes ago. No—you cannot see madame."

"What is it?" asked Rose from above.

"A beggar."

"Then shut the door." Looking over the bannister she saw an evil face peering in through the narrow opening Babette had left.

"But his hand is in the way, madame."

"Shut it," said Rose, quietly. The hand quickly slid out and Babette locked the door and leaned against it, panting.

"Ten long minutes he has been here, Miss Rose, trying to get at you."

"At me? How strange. You must be mistaken."

Babette closed her lips with a snap, but would say no more, and kept a romantically vigilant watch over her mistress until Robert returned the next day. Late in the afternoon, as he and Rose were sauntering over the beach, comparing lists and details, Babette appeared with suppressed excitement to say that some one wished to see monsieur. Babette's excitements were so easily set afoot that they never surprised her mistress, who tranquilly awaited Robert's return until tired, and then took her way to the summer-house. She had been there some time, when, glancing at the house, she saw a face at the window which startled her to her feet.

"The Dancer here?" she asked herself. "Surely she cannot have the effrontery to make a second attempt. She must need help of some sort. I wonder why Robert does not send for me—probably because he knows how distasteful she is to me. But I ought to receive her."

To enter the house Rose had to pass under the windows of the dining-room, where she had seen the face. As she came under the first window a few words in Saline's incisive voice arrested her.

"No—do you think I have forgotten my lonely ride to

Paris? Oh, no. That sort of thing a woman does not forget. It is needless to proceed. I cannot be bought off. I want to see you reap the fruit of your mistakes. I do not know why you should have wished to deceive Miss Lloyd; but you certainly did so. By the laws of France she is not your wife, as none but the civil marriage is recognized by the state. If I were quite merciless I would not bring this to your notice while there is still time. My friend, the attorney, who has twice called upon you, is in need of money. I therefore propose that you put it in his hands. He will see to it that the irregularity is overlooked; the civil marriage can then be performed, and I shall have been the means of making you both happy." Her words closed with a sweeping courtesy.

Robert replied coldly:

"Thanks; you are disinterested. In your place I would have waited the coup de théâtre. In consideration of your kindness you may tell me what sum your thief attorney asks, and perhaps I will pay it to you now."

"Ah, that—he must settle it. You can see him a week from now, perhaps. I do not know his plans."

"And now you will kindly leave my house. I am exceedingly busy this afternoon."

"So I saw from the windows," she replied. As he moved to the door, forcing her to go with the storm she

felt gathering behind his cold control, a revulsion of feeling came to her.

"Why did you deceive her? She was the only woman I ever loved; the only woman I ever saw who could never be such as I. Why were you willing to make her child a bastard?" The menace of his eyes frightened her; it drove her to the door and out of it without another word. As she stood on the step, trembling, a sound of whispering drew her attention to Babette kneeling and bending over something prone under the windows. The woman knew at once.

"What have I done?" she cried under her breath. With superstitious fear she noiselessly stepped nearer. At her presence Babette raised her head and straightway came to her feet.

"Don't you dare look at her. You are bad. You belong to Satan. Go—or I'll stone you. The stones bite. They won't leave much beauty in your face." Saline smiled and at that Babette made one blind, mad rush.

She does not remember how many stones she threw; she knows that some found their mark in the terrified face; she knows that she ran until the memory of Rose lying in the dust blinded her eyes with tears and she fled back to find that Robert had carried her mistress to her room. What happened there Babette never knew.

She knew that monsieur went about the house white to the lips, with beads on his brow. She remembers that she ran all the way to the village with a telegram to Father Benedict, and she remembers the half hours and the very minutes as they passed, and never will be able to forget them till she goes to sleep forever.

Whenever she went to her mistress' room she found her lying silent, with closed eyes, and whether she slept or whether she waked Babette did not know. Once when monsieur was out of the room Babette leaned over her and kissed away a tear. But Rose made no sign that she was conscious, and Babette choked herself into silence in the snowy curtains of the great bed.

Father Benedict arrived early in the morning, bringing a physician; but the physician soon left without comment, save that her nervous system had received a severe shock; that he could prescribe only tonics and rest; that beyond these he could suggest nothing until madame had come to herself. The day was spent in waiting. They knew that she was lulled once to sleep by Robert's playing, but they think she did not sleep again.

Robert would allow none but himself to watch with her.

At dawn he fell deeply, perilously asleep, with his hand upon hers.

He dreamed that she rose and stood by his side, that

she kissed him many times, with falling tears, and he slept again.

In the morning the house was wakened by one great cry. It brought Benedict from his room, Babette from the kitchen, and the servants huddling at the foot of the stairs.

Midway in the room Robert stood looking wildly about him. With both hands he pointed to the empty bed.

"No, no, my son," said Benedict, "she is elsewhere in the house. She is better—that is all."

Robert heard none of it. He was rapidly reviewing all that had happened in the last three days.

A look of absolute terror grew in his face. Out of the room, and out of the house, and swift over the shelving sands. There was no time to lose. Mother of Compassion, she was not yours! Leave her to us!

He dared not raise his eyes to the sea breaking north on the peninsula. He raced at it head down. He heard no one behind him. There was blood in his eyes. There was no breath in his body.

He came to the spit of sand in the white teeth of the breakers. Whiter than they, Rose, all that had been dearest in the world, lay there at his feet and the sea

lapped lovingly at her where it had laid her dead in the cradle of sand.

Benedict came none too soon. He waited, standing over the bodies, with sobbing prayer, until Robert rose a madman, and Benedict fought with him for their lives.

It was a mad fight. The sea waited greedily on either hand. Their feet slipped into its sucking current. The hot sun broke through the clouds and beat upon them. Their bodies swayed black in the light from where Babette saw them on their knees in the glare.

At last Benedict crushed him down beside the peaceful dead, gasping with spent breath:

“Look in her face! Pray!”

God knows whether or not it was prayer.

Robert's youth was dead. The bread of life had been turned to ashes.

CHAPTER XI.

"Out of a worldful."

Seven months afterward a clear, beautiful night hung quiet over the Milton hills of Massachusetts, and Milton Hall stood genially glowing out of the shadows.

It was not yet time, and the music-room was alone with its mistress, a slender, delicate woman, silver-haired and deft-fingered, with dreamy eyes. The tall man entering through the far portieres had streaks of silver in his hair. But he was young. The lady watched him closely, earnestly, as he came forward.

"Am I speaking to my hostess, Miss Winthrop?" asked Robert, and the lady assented almost nervously.

"Of course, you are Mr. Dinsmore—Mr. Robert Dinsmore?"

"Yes, madame. I was shown to my room before meeting you."

"I am very glad you have come—very. I wonder where my brother is—I want him to see you first, before the rest, I mean. Pardon me; I thought you were much younger."

She was growing more nervous, and Robert noticed

it with some surprise. Was this the vaunted self-possession of an American hostess?

"Age is not always truthful. I certainly am not very young in feeling, not so young as my birth-date would make me."

"I thought you were only twenty-three or four."

"That is true, madame. My hair? It turned white one morning on the seashore, under a burning sun. Such things happen sometimes."

Miss Winthrop dropped into a chair, working her delicate hands as she looked into Robert's face with some mute appeal which he could not understand.

She continually glanced from the clock to the door until Robert also fixed his eyes upon the vacant spot with an expectancy reflecting her own. Conversation seemed so difficult that they waited in silence. Many minutes passed.

A step sounded in the hall, and Miss Winthrop rose to it slowly, breathlessly, it seemed to Robert. Until the doors opened he remained seated, then he also rose and stood waiting. The gentleman entering exclaimed, as he turned back to close the doors:

"Has not Mr. Dinsmore come yet? I cannot overcome my——" Turning, he encountered Robert's face. "Robert Dinsmore," he said to himself, slowly and quietly.

Robert went forward mechanically. He had seen that face in the mirror not a quarter of an hour ago. But this was an older face, a happier one than his own. Miss Winthrop hurried to them impulsively.

"Forgive us, Mr. Dinsmore. We are very rude—but we will explain later. You seem to come terribly close to our lives. Have you ever known your father?"

"No, madame."

"And your mother?" exclaimed Mr. Winthrop, quickly.

"My mother died at my birth. I bear her name—Dinsmore."

"Amy Dinsmore," corrected Mr. Winthrop.

There was a pause, during which the three looked keenly at one another in a sort of arrested animation. Robert drew from the little finger of his right hand two rings and handed them to Mr. Winthrop.

He examined them aside, tremulously, and returned them with a face which, in that moment, had undergone a change.

"Those rings are mine, my son. They were your mother's." Robert winced. "Her engagement and her wedding rings." Then his voice broke from its excited suppression. "Do you hear?" he cried. "He belongs to us, Dorothy—he is ours—all ours—this splendid fellow—Dinsmore—the great Dinsmore! My son!"

Sounds of arriving guests murmured from the hall. Dorothy Winthrop hurried Robert and her brother into a recessed room and locked its door, and when the three emerged the sun seemed to have risen in their faces.

When the musical and the ovation to the great violinist were over, when the guests were gone and again they were alone together, they looked at one another in fresh wonder.

"If Rose could only know!" exclaimed Robert to himself.

"Your betrothed?" his father asked.

"My wife."

"How glad we shall be," cried Miss Winthrop; but her happy face turned to Robert's eyes and the joy died out of her voice.

"No—Rose is dead," he answered steadily.

What had been before a thought, an inspiration to Robert Winthrop, now became a reality. He gathered his son to him and straightway Dorothy Winthrop passed out over the shining floor and closed the music-room.

"Such a fate as that was mine. I know what it means," said the father while Robert learned a new pain in poignant sympathy. "Your mother and I were married without my father's knowledge, not sensibly, perhaps, but nobly and truly. I was recalled to speed him through the

gate of death and soon all news of my bride ceased. As my father still hung between life and death, I sent my nearest friend to Paris. Before word could come from him, I fell crazily ill, and when again there was any sense in my empty brain, Amy had disappeared as though she had never been. That was my sorrow—a frightful uncertainty which, even now at this late day, has often waked me at night with a clammy fright of what it may have been that befel her. There are natures so infinitely caressing that they twine about your heart in tendrils that live a man's life out. From these there is no escape. If your Rose was one of these, I pity you, my boy." The look in Robert's face was such as a man hates to see. Winthrop said with a woman's tact: "I have looked for you from that day to this. Tell me of your mother. Now that her son is here, she seems at my side once more."

In telling the tale, Robert freed himself of the intensity of his mood. Often when the terrors of his early life suggested themselves Winthrop grew hot and uneasy, exclaiming:

"Absurd! Monstrous!" And again: "It was a lie! You were more honestly born than many another in wedlock. You were born in wedlock of love!" It seemed to Robert that Winthrop was literally re-living his life with him.

"Then the keynote of your life has been illegitimacy?"

"Yes; you must consider that that was the frank, general supposition. It went near to making a hideous discord of all." He paused painfully. "In the end, it was illegitimacy that robbed me to skin and bone. The fear of it for her child bereft Rose of her reason—sent her to death by her own hand."

Winthrop said no word. Tears rose hot and biting to his eyes, and he listened, unconscious of anything but the quiet power of the man before him and the knowledge gained of a fearful world hitherto unknown to him. At last he rose, when Robert had told of his life at the Riviera, and the end seemed near, saying:

"Let us go out. It is stifling here. Do you smoke?"

Two points of light and the tread of two strong men passed up and down the long piazza. Moonlight cast shadows of the odorous pines aslant the ground. The cold freshness and the peace of midnight brooded in the air.

"And that was the end," finished Robert; "seven months ago." There was a long silence before the father said huskily:

"The end—and the beginning. We are two men together. We have a good deal of a life to live. It is hunger to the heart, I know. But there is a deal of satisfac-

tion in struggle and achievement, and there is some little pleasure in victories won for sake of a beloved memory. I speak of what I know. And yet—pardon me—there is one hunger that probably has not reached you, the hunger of a man for his own creation.” Winthrop stood eagerly apart until he received the quick, vibrating response:

“Something like the longing of a man for his father. I have known that all my life.”

Their hands met and they turned into the house, having found each other out of a worldful of men.

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

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